

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

# From Vulnerability to Atrocity

---

Explaining the Massacres in Palestine in 1948

Jonas S. Iversen

*Master's Thesis*  
*Department of Political Science*  
*Faculty of Social Sciences*  
*University of Oslo*  
*October 2013*



# Contents

## *Acknowledgements*

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Research Question	
1.2 My Contribution	
1.3 Organization	
<b>2. Background</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1 A Brief Historical Introduction	
2.1.1 The 1948 Palestine War	
2.1.2 Zionism, Jewish Immigration, and Changes of Power	
2.2 Historiography	
2.2.1 New History and Oral History	
2.3 A Causal Model of the Massacres: Causes and Consequences	
2.4 The Massacres	
2.4.1 To Label the Massacres: Jewish or Zionist?	
2.4.2 The Definition of Massacre	
2.4.3 The Scope of the Massacres in 1948	
<b>3. Theory</b> .....	<b>17</b>
3.1 Definition	
3.1.1 What is Evildoing?	
3.1.2 What is Collective Evildoing?	
3.2 Vetlesen's Model on Collective Evildoing	
3.2.1 The Model's Theoretical Background	
3.2.2 Evil and Human Agency	
3.2.3 Summary	
3.3 Concluding thoughts	
3.3.1 Vetlesen's Model: My Assessment	
3.3.2 Observable Implications	
3.3.3 Comparing and Labeling Cases of Collective Evildoing	

<b>4. Research Design</b>	30
4.1 General Methodological Considerations	
4.1.1 The Level and Form of Analysis	
4.1.2 Case Studies	
4.2 Case Selection	
4.2.1 Hypotheses	
4.2.2 Typical Cases – The Expulsion Order Context	
4.2.3 Deviant Cases – Dissident Massacres	
4.3 Sources	
4.3.1 Types of Sources	
4.3.2 Available Data	
<b>5. Discussion</b>	39
5.1 Deir Yassin: The Infamous Massacre of 1948	
5.1.1 A Result of Tactics or Revenge?	
5.1.2 Following Orders or Requesting Authorization?	
5.1.3 Transferring Vulnerability?	
5.1.4 Feelings of Responsibility	
5.1.5 Killing Fleeing Palestinians	
5.1.6 A New Hypothesis	
5.2 Massacres during Expulsion Operations	
5.2.1 Operation Dani and the Massacre in Lydda	
5.2.2 Operation Yoav and the Massacre in Dawayima	
5.2.3 Operation Hiram	
5.3 General Causes for Committing Massacres	
5.3.1 Orders and Ideology	
5.3.2 The Halutzim-Generation	
5.3.3 The Holocaust-Analogy	
5.3.4 The Massacre of Ethnic Cleansing	
5.3.5 The Question of Vulnerability	
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	72
<b>Bibliography</b>	75

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all I would like to thank my brilliant supervisor, Professor Anders Kjølberg. He has been great; critical, available and supportive. I also want to give a special thanks to Biljana Kovačević for being a good friend and facilitator during the weeks of intense writing. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Andreas Føllesdal for pushing me forward when needed and to Professor Arne Johan Vetlesen for inspirational thoughts and helpful deliberations. And to my friends, particularly Øyvind Stiansen og Maral Mirshahi for fruitful input. Finally I would like to thank my family for being supportive, especially the little ones who gave me energy just by being themselves.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The most crucial year of the Israel/Palestine conflict was 1948. This is when Israel became a state and most of the Palestinians lost their homes. The Palestinian exodus that took place during the *1948 Palestine War* can partly be explained by the so-called “atrocities factor” (Morris, 2004a: 592). This means that Palestinians fled due to the fear that arose from instances of massacres and other atrocities by Jewish soldiers, and from propaganda about such atrocities. This “atrocities factor”-explanation has been emphasized in more recent scholarship (see Abdel Jawad, 2007). Explaining the exodus has received much focus by historians. Explaining the *massacres*, however, has received less scholarly attention. Central questions in this respect are: Did the massacres result from direct orders or can they be better explained as resulting from soldiers’ own initiatives? What role did ideology play? More generally, *what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres in the 1948 Palestine War?* These are the fundamental questions that this thesis will be about. The framework I will use in an effort to explain these massacres are a model made by philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen (2005); a model on what he calls “collective evildoing”. This thesis will show *how* a combination of ideology and experience – historical and circumstantial – plausibly affected and triggered a sense of collective vulnerability for the perpetrators which in turn caused them to commit massacres. This causal mechanism incorporates the role of orders, and suggests that the perpetrators desired to act atrocious due to the mental-logic that collective vulnerability is ‘transferred’ to the victim through violence.

### 1.1 Research Question

The debate on the Palestinian exodus of 1948 has produced several conclusions which emphasize different explanatory factors. The leading Israeli historian on the exodus question, Benny Morris, famously concluded in his groundbreaking book in 1988, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*, that the Palestinian exodus was

a bi-product of war and was not caused by a premeditated design (Picaudou, 2008: 6). This conclusion could also apply for the cause of the atrocities; to see them as a function of the ugly nature of war, thus caused by *circumstantial factors*.

One of the critics<sup>1</sup> of this conclusion points out Morris' disregard of the *intentions* of the Jewish leadership – intentions of “compulsory transfer”, i.e. to forcefully expel the Palestinians out of Palestine – thus emphasizing premeditation (Masalha, 1991). This way of explaining what caused the Palestinian exodus points to a different way of explaining the massacres; seeing them as part of an ethnic cleansing project and mainly caused by *ideology*. This hypothesis emphasizes an *intentionalist* explanation for the massacres, pointing to the structure of ideology and norms, thus *structural factors* rather than circumstantial factors. A similar *intentionalist* explanation is made by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2006). He focuses more on the systematic planning of the Jewish leadership during the 1948 war than on the ideological history of the Zionist movement. Pappé (2006) interprets the centralized military policy (Plan D) as an *order* for ethnic cleansing (a product of Zionism), not primarily as a plan guided by military necessity (a product of war). The Plan was, however, developed *during* the war and was thus influenced by the *circumstances* of war. In this way, even though orders and intentions of ethnic cleansing are emphasized as the main cause for what took place during the war – such as instances of expulsion operations and massacres – the explanation is *a combination of structural and circumstantial factors*.

After rewriting the *The Birth* based on more declassified Israeli documents, Morris (2004a: 60) admits the existence of intentions about expulsion of Palestinians among the Jewish leadership prior to the war, and that these ideas contributed to the way the war was fought. In this way, even though Morris (2004a: 60) holds on to the conclusion that the 1948 War itself was the main explanatory variable for the expulsion operations which took place, and that no centralized expulsion policy was ever issued, the explanation presented is *a combination of structural and circumstantial factors*. So even though Morris (2004a) and Pappé (2006) emphasize

---

<sup>1</sup> For the debate on the first edition of Morris' book *The Birth* see Finkelstien (1991, 1992), Masalha (1991), and Morris (1991). See also Shlaim (1995) and Morris (1995).



different explanatory factors for what happened in 1948, they both show that it was a large degree of intention behind the expulsions (ideological structure), and that policy was *not* premeditated prior to the war (hence the importance of circumstance). It was, however, a combination of Zionist goals and the situation of war – a combination of structural and circumstantial factors.

What is common for the approaches presented above is the focus on the intentions of the Jewish *leadership*. What about the Jewish *soldiers*? The Jewish soldiers and *their* intentions have not been of primary focus in the 1948 literature. This lack of attention opens up for new questions, particularly in relation to the massacres perpetrated by Jewish soldiers. The Palestinian scholar, Saleh Abdel Jawad (2007: 70), who focuses specifically on these massacres, argues that they were not only a by-product of ethnic cleansing operations, but was a tool for scaring the Palestinians into flight. Here again the focus is on the Jewish *leadership* and *their* intentions. The atrocious behavior of Jewish soldiers appears to be insufficiently explained; either assumed to be resulting from orders or seen as a natural part of war without further explanation. Can the massacres committed by Jewish soldiers be understood as resulting from policies and orders from their leaders, or were they initiated by the soldiers themselves? If so, what were the causal mechanisms? Were the massacres parts of ethnic cleansing operations? And what role did history and ideology play? These are questions which follows the main research question of this thesis:

- *What caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres of Palestinians during the 1948 Palestine War?*

## **1.2 My Contribution**

The contribution of this thesis is twofold. First, it adds new perspectives and interpretations to the history of the Israel/Palestine conflict in general and the *1948 War* in particular. Although the acts of massacres in 1948 have been described by historians and others, they have not, to my knowledge, been analyzed through the lens of a comprehensive model which can *explain* such atrocities. Analyzing the massacres with Vetlesen's (2005) model is an effort to understand *why* they occurred and what

*caused* the perpetrators to act this way. My particular contribution in this respect is to show *how* feelings of revenge and collective vulnerability may have played an important role in causing Jewish soldiers to commit massacres, and that the massacres are poorly understood as merely caused by “obedience to authority”. Orders is found to be significant, but is better understood as authorization than mandatory demands for massacre, and as a source for the perpetrators to not feel responsible for their own acts.

Furthermore, the findings of this thesis emphasize the importance of ideology and norms for *collectivizing* identity and human agency, e.g. feelings of vulnerability and responsibility. It also connects such ideational factors to the Jewish experience in Europe. This thesis presents a general explanation on how both ideology and experience may have affected the character of Jewish soldiers (i.e. how they think, feel, and relate to others) in a way which may have contributed to causing the massacres. It is the *causal mechanisms* which is outlined and explained in this thesis. Particular atrocious behavior during 1948 and statements by Jewish soldiers are shown to identify such a mechanism. The findings suggest that the massacres can *partly* be understood as caused by a desire to ‘transfer’ collective vulnerability from the Jewish people as a group over to the Palestinians as a group. In sum, it shows that what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres was a combination of character, structure, and circumstance.

Second, it adds empirical work to Vetlesen’s model. Vetlesen’s model is created on the bases of very few conflicts. This thesis, being a case study of a new and different case than those analyzed by Vetlesen (2005), “tests” the applicability of Vetlesen’s model further. The “testing” is only indirect in the sense that this case, the *1948 Palestine War*, is not selected on the basis of methodological principals – it is *not* chosen with the aim of maximizing the ability to generalize the models applicability, e.g. a least-likely case. However, it shows that Vetlesen’s model could be fruitfully applied in non-genocidal cases of ethnic cleansing. This twofold contribution will thus contribute to the discipline of history as well as to social science.

### **1.3 Organization**

The next part of this thesis, Chapter 2, is a presentation of some relevant history of the *1948 Palestine War* in general and the massacres in particular. Part of that historical introduction will be historiography. Since the Israel/Palestine conflict is still very much ongoing today, the consensus and disagreements among historians are worth making explicit. Chapter 3 is on the theoretical framework which will be the main tool of the analysis. That chapter is a presentation of Professor Arne Johan Vetlesen's model on "collective evildoing". The factors of group-think ideology and sense of vulnerability will be of central importance here.

Chapter 4 will be about methods. That chapter will discuss the considerations made when selecting specific cases for scrutiny, i.e. massacres. The explanatory variable of "expulsion orders" will be the main concern in that selection process. Chapter 5 will first be a discussion of the cases selected. Then it follows with a general discussion about the 1948 War as a whole – focusing of more structural and historical factors. The thesis closes with a concluding chapter.

# Chapter 2

## Background

This chapter will provide relevant historical background for the discussion. For those readers who feel up to date on the historical debate on the *1948 Palestine War*, this section might seem superfluous. However, since this history has many quite strong living myths, it is necessary to establish some consensus of the facts before moving forward. Not least because the Israel/Palestine conflict is ongoing, the interpretation of history, especially of the 1948 Palestine War, could have present political implications. This chapter therefore presents a short and general historical introduction, and some historiography, before turning to the massacres in particular.

### 2.1 A Brief Historical Introduction

#### 2.1.1 *The 1948 Palestine War*

The *1948 Palestine War* (from here on the *1948 War*) is what the Palestinians call *al-Nakba* – “the Catastrophe”. The Israelis usually calls it the *War of Independence*. The *1948 War* is often presented as being fought in two stages. First it was a so-called *civil war* (or *unofficial war*), in the British ruled Mandatory Palestine, between the Jewish community (the *Yishuv*) on one side, and the Palestinian Arabs on the other. This took place between November 30, 1947 and May 14, 1948. The second stage was the so-called *First Arab-Israeli War* fought between the newly established State of Israel and intervening armed forces from neighboring Arab countries<sup>2</sup>. This took place between May 15, 1948 and January 7, 1949 (Shlaim, 2001: 28).

The 1948 War started after the UN General Assembly had voted on the UN Partition Plan November 29, 1947. The Partition Plan was a recommendation for establishing an Arab and a Jewish state in Palestine following the termination of the British rule there. The Arab state was then decided to be about 44 % of territorial Palestine, and the Jewish state about 55 %. The remaining 1 % was Jerusalem with Bethlehem and other

---

<sup>2</sup> Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Iraq and Libanon.

surrounding land, and it was recommended to be an international zone under UN responsibility (Persson, 2001: 46-47). The Arab world in general, and the Palestinian Arab community in particular, was opposed to the idea of partition and to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Important reasons for this were that two-thirds of the population of Palestine at the time was Arabs, many cities with Arab majority were planned to be part of the Jewish state, and Arabs owned 94 % of the land area of Palestine (Rogan, 2011: 318-319). The Arab world looked at the Partition Plan as grossly unjust and rejected it. The leaders of the Jewish side initially and officially accepted the Plan, but they secretly saw the Plan merely as a first step towards establishing a Jewish state on their own more expansionist terms (Pappé, 2006: 35-37; Shlaim, 2001: 29-30; Waage, 2013: 104). The expansionist intentions were rooted in Zionism as a political ideology and movement, and it was the Zionist leadership that led the Yishuv in 1948.

The broader context for how the UN could propose the establishment of this Jewish state in the first place was based on a fairly new demographic reality in Palestine. Jews were fleeing from European anti-Semitism and Nazi atrocities. This led to large scale immigration into Palestine. Palestine became a common destination for many, primarily due to Zionism which presented Palestine as the 'Jewish Homeland'. The idea to establish in Palestine "a national home for the Jewish people" was supported by the British Government through the Balfour-declaration (Karsh, 2002: 14). Zionism, immigration and the UN Partition Plan were all structural factors which made the 1948 War a seemingly inevitable event. The war was won by the strongest side, the Jewish side, and the State of Israel was born and consolidated during this war. The next section will outline these structural causes further.

### *2.1.2 Zionism, Jewish Immigration, and Changes of Power*

In 1920 the Jewish population in Palestine was 61 000, which was only 10% of the total population (Khalidi, 1971: 841). In order to create a Jewish state in Palestine – i.e. a state where the overwhelming majority of the population was Jews – immigration of Jews was needed. Immigration accelerated after Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. The three following years, about 170,000 Jews came to Palestine as refugees

(Waage, 2013: 79). In 1946 the Jewish population in Palestine was ten times greater than in 1920. Around 608 000 Jews lived in Palestine at this point which was about one-third of the total population (Khalidi, 1971: 842-843). The Zionist ideology played an important role in this development.

Zionism has its roots in late 1800s European settler colonialism<sup>3</sup>. However, the Zionist movement was not out to rule Palestine as it was, nor to change Palestine according to the national interests of a foreign country. In the decades prior to the 1948 War, the Zionist movement represented two main approaches towards the Arabs: Left (Labour) and Right (Revisionist). The difference between them was in tactics rather than goals, and lay primarily in their view on the use of force. Both sides favored Jewish immigration (Gorny, 1987: 176-177; Kellerman, 1993: 35-43). Jewish immigration became crucial for transforming Palestine into a Jewish state. The dream of a Jewish state implied that it would be favorable if fewer non-Jews lived in Palestine, particularly fewer Arab-Muslims which represented the dominant majority of inhabitants of Palestine. Ideas about how to remove Arabs out of Palestine was present in Zionist ideology from the start, and it often reflected a prejudice attitude against Arabs; representing them as non-existent, as savages, or that the Jewish right and connection to the land “answered a higher need” (Terry, 1976: 69-70).

The Zionist movement was headed by David Ben-Gurion in 1948. He was the prominent leader who built the Yishuv’s military power and became the first prime minister of Israel (Shlaim, 2001: 16). Ben-Gurion understood that Zionism “was a colonizing and expansionist ideology and movement” and stated already in 1938 that “politically we [the Zionists] are the aggressors and they [the Palestinians] defend themselves (Morris, 1999b: 652). However, such an understanding made him conclude that the conflict could only be resolved by war (Shlaim, 2001: 18). In a letter to his son in 1937, Ben-Gurion argued for accepting partition of Palestine on pragmatic grounds; a first step for later expansion. The statement below reflects this expansionist attitude where violence towards the Palestinians is seen as acceptable, even in areas *not* granted to a Jewish state in a partition plan.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Said (1980: 56-114) on Zionism and its connections to European colonialism.

[W]e should not accept that Jews wouldn't be able to return to their homeland because Arabs choose not to allow [it]. We will have to expel the [Palestinian] Arabs and take their place [...] and if we need to resort to force [...] we will have the power to do so

(Ben-Gurion, 2011)

Immigration of Jews was also essential for making the Zionists movement powerful in Palestine. When the Arab neighbor states intervened in Palestine May 15, 1948, the Jewish military forces (IDF) fielded more than 35,000 troops. By contrast, the total number of Arab forces was under 25,000. After the first truce in June, the Jewish side also had the best military equipment (Shlaim, 2001: 35).

Thus, at each stage of the war, the IDF significantly outnumbered all the Arab forces arrayed against it, and by the final stage of the war its superiority ratio was nearly two to one

(Shlaim, 2001: 35)

Troops and weapons were two important factors deciding the outcome of the war. Equally important, if not more important, was the political and military *organization* which made the Jewish side superior. One important reason for this was that soldiers of the Haganah – the principal military organization of the Zionist movement – had warfare experience. They had cooperated with the British forces; first against the Palestinians during the Arab Revolt in the 1930s, then in the Second World War (Pappé, 2006: 16-17). Another reason why the Jewish side was better organized for war than the Palestinians was that the Palestinian society was rural and fragmented without a common leadership structure. The Palestinian society was also seriously weakened by harsh British attacks some years earlier (Kimmerling & Migdal, 2003: 102-131). In addition to Palestinian disorganization, the intervening Arab countries had diverging aims and interests. None of them were fighting for an independent Palestinian state (Shlaim, 2001: 36; see also Rogan and Shlaim, 2001).

The result of the 1948 War was between 600,000 and 800,000 up-rooted Palestinians. This means that out of the total population of 1.25 million, the majority lost their homes. Out of the 900,000 Palestinians who lived in the part of Palestine where Israel was established, less than 160,000 remained. Simultaneously, the Jewish population increased from 650,000 to 1 million in November 1949 (Masalha, 2012: 5, Morris,

2004a: 7; Pappé, 2006; xiii; Waage, 2013: 126). The Palestinian exodus was, at least in part, a result of *direct* expulsion. Historians have debated the causes of the Palestinian exodus where massacres played a significant role. In order to discuss the massacres properly, it is important to know what the historians say about them more generally.

## 2.2 Historiography

### 2.2.1 *New History and Oral History*

The traditional narrative on the 1948 War was dominated by the official Israeli narrative and remained unchallenged within the Western world until late 1980s. At that point, Israeli and Western classified documents about the war were declassified. This resulted in new perspectives on what happened in 1948. The four Israeli historians who at that point challenged the dominant Israeli narrative of the 1948 War were Simha Flapan, Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, and Ilan Pappé. They were collectively known as the “New Historians”. The so-called “New Historians” debunked many of the established myths about the war (Shlaim, 1995). In many respects, it moved the perspective about the 1948 War closer to the Palestinian narrative – represented by Aref al-Aref, Mustafa Murad Dabbagh, and Walid Khalidi<sup>4</sup> (Masalha, 2012: 213-214; Picaudou, 2008: 4) – but this time with Israeli documents to confirm it which made it more influential. However, the Palestinian historians did not accept Benny Morris’s functionalist conclusion mentioned in the introduction; that the Palestinian exodus was a *by-product* of the war. They looked for more structural and intentionalist explanations. Nur Mashala’s work represented an important effort in this respect by showing how the idea of removing the Palestinians away from Palestine was present in the Zionist ideology dating back to the 1880s (Picaudou, 2008: 6-7).

Another Palestinian reaction to the new Israeli narrative presented by the ‘New Historians’, was efforts to use living eye-witnesses rather than merely declassified documents as legitimate sources, that is, using oral testimonies for writing history (Picaudou, 2008: 7). So-called ‘oral history’ has increasingly been acknowledged as a suitable methodology for establishing a more accurate account of the 1948 War

---

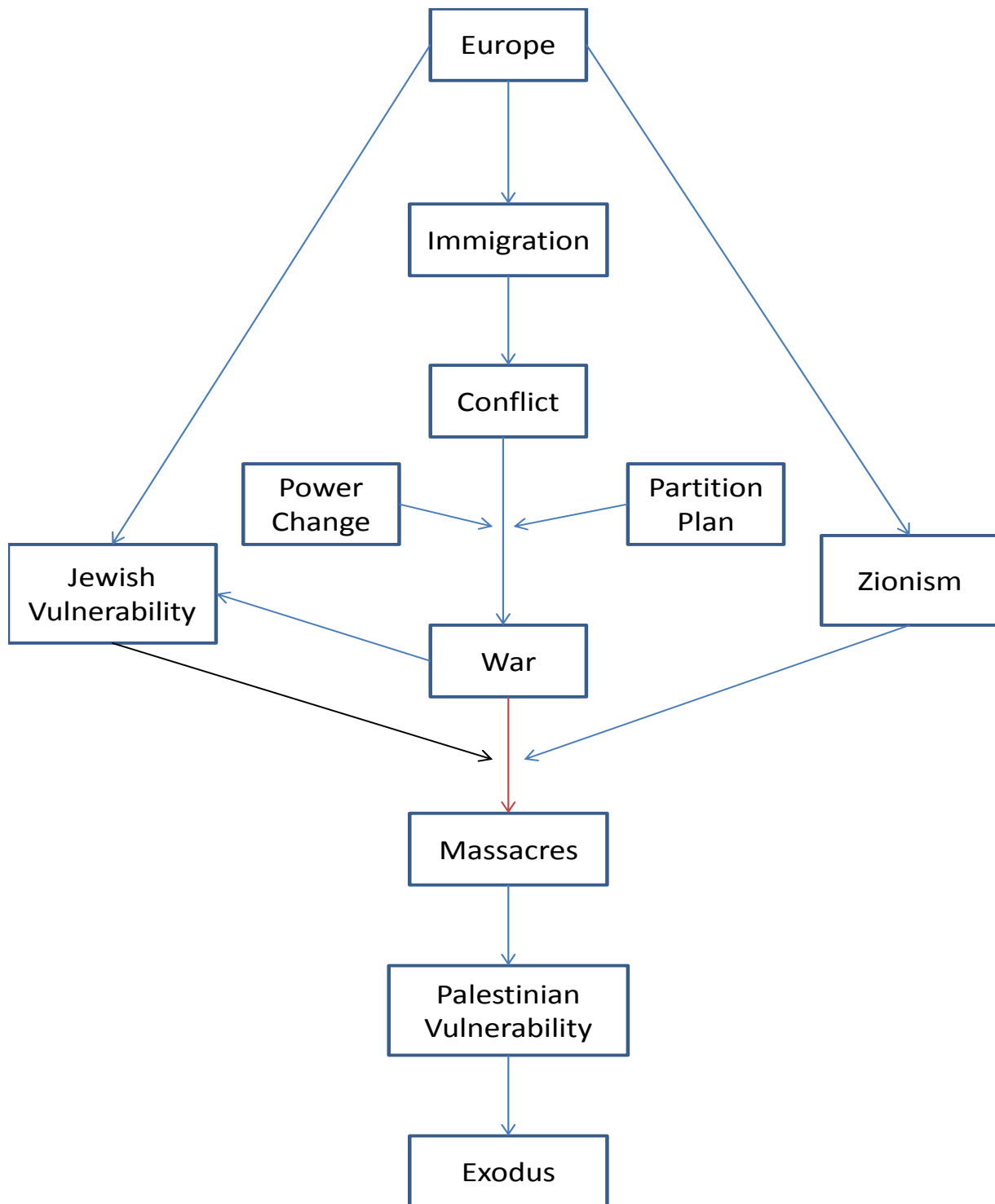
<sup>4</sup> Much of what Walid Khalidi wrote many years ago still stands today; see (Khalidi 2005, 2008).



(Masalha, 2012: 215-220; Nets-Zehngut, 2011: 292). The Palestinian Birzeit University Research Center has been the main contributor for recording Palestinian oral history the last two decades – moving from an anthropological approach to a historical approach where cross-checking of information became an integral part of the study (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 62-63). Oral history has been particularly important for establishing the nature and scope of the massacres. It has confirmed and provided details to already recorded massacres, and sometimes presented new evidence which later were confirmed by Israeli documents, e.g. the Abu Shusha massacre (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 65). Some other cases remain more uncertain, e.g. the Tantura massacre (see Morris, 2004b; Pappé, 2001).

Even though differences remain between the leading historians about the impact of the particular causes of the war and the exodus, and the interpretation of Plan D, an overall consensus has emerged about what took place in 1948: it is now frequently been characterized as an act of *ethnic cleansing* (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 70; Masalha, 2012: 10; Morris in Shavit, 2004; Pappé, 2006; Waage, 2013: 134-136). That the *1948 Palestine War* is now presented as a case of ethnic cleansing opens the door for new comparative analyses. The term ‘ethnic cleansing’ in particular invites a comparison to the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s – a case which made the term commonly known (Mønnesland, 2008: 349). Pappé (2006) makes such a comparison throughout his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, by juxtaposing certain similar statements and descriptions of the two cases. Such a comparison made me think that Vetlesen’s (2005) model might be applicable in the Palestinian case. Before turning to Vetlesen’s model, more about the massacres in 1948 is needed, starting with a causal model.

### 2.3 A Causal Model of the Massacres: Causes and Consequences



The causal model above is a simplified way to show the causes and consequences of the massacres. It is partly a summary of the background history presented in this chapter, and partly a presentation of the central variables of this thesis. “Massacres” is

the dependent variable. That the war caused massacres is indicated with a red arrow which is also influenced by two intervening variables. The model is meant to show the connection of the three most important explanatory variables labeled “War”, “Zionism”, and “Jewish Vulnerability”, the latter being the main contribution of this thesis and is indicated with a black arrow.

The causal model above traces the causes of the massacres back to events in Europe. As described above, European anti-Semitism and hostilities against Jews during the first half of the 20th century, which peaked with the Holocaust, were the main cause why Zionism became so influential and why Palestine received so many Jewish immigrants from Europe. The rapid increase of Jewish settlers into Palestine, combined with the ideology they represented, led to a conflict between Palestinian Arabs and the Jewish community (the *Yishuv*). This became a national conflict between the two communities which turned into a war when the conflict intensified. It intensified partly as a result of the UN Partition Plan. It also intensified as a result of changes of power within Palestine; diminishing British control together with an increasingly better organized and more powerful Zionist movement. This power-change happened in the context of a weak and fragmented Palestinian society. Before entering a discussion of the causes of massacres in general, and what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres in Palestine in 1948 in particular, it is necessary to discuss what constitutes a massacre and to get a sense of how large and how many massacres there were during the *1948 Palestine War*.

## **2.4 The Massacres**

### *2.4.1 To Label the Massacres: Jewish or Zionist?*

The massacres in question were executed by Jewish soldiers and Palestinians were the victims. The Jewish soldiers were part of the Zionist movement and led by the Zionist leadership, so it seems more accurate to refer to these massacres as *Zionist* massacres rather than *Jewish* massacres. There is a close connection between Zionism and the Jewish identity. After all, the essence of Zionism is to create a Jewish state. Thus, religion and ethnicity plays a role here. Nonetheless, I believe it is important to keep

the distinction between Zionism and ‘Jewishness’ as clear as possible since this is a recurring challenge in the debate and the understanding of this conflict – a conflict which, to quote Ben-Gurion, “is in its essence a political one” (Morris, 1999b: 652). I will therefore use the label ‘Zionist’ massacres rather than ‘Jewish’ massacres if needed, even though they mean the same in this context – massacres committed by Jewish soldiers. I will refer to the leadership as either Zionist or Jewish, but it implies the same leadership. The label ‘Jewish soldiers’ includes both regular and paramilitary fighters, including the so-called dissident paramilitaries (see Chapter 5). To my knowledge, there were no massacres executed by Jewish civilians. The focus will thus be on the massacres perpetrated by those referred to as ‘Jewish soldiers’.

#### 2.4.2 *A Definition of Massacre*

The number of massacres in 1948 depends partly on the credibility of available sources and partly on the estimation of unknown or still secret atrocities with no available sources. It also depends on the definition of massacre. One way to define it is “the act or an instance of killing a large number of humans indiscriminately and cruelly” (Free Dictionary). This definition is a very wide one, but at the same time commonsensical. But to be able to measure the number of massacres that did occur during a period of war, the “large number” part of the definition must be more accurate. Others who write extensively on massacres have not clarified how many humans have to be killed for it to be defined as a massacre, but the *number* as well as the element of *indiscrimination* are recurring features (Levene and Roberts, 1999: 5). Also factors of *time* and *space* is important; within what time period the killing takes place and within how large of an area the killing takes place (Levene and Roberts, 1999: 6). Either way, there can be no massacre without any killing.

The Palestinian scholar, Saleh Abdel Jawad (2007: 75), defines massacres in his article *Zionist Massacres* as

the killing of unarmed civilians or combatants who have surrendered and who have come under the authority of the conquering force, by an armed military or para-military force. Massacres also involve the use of lethal force [...] against civilians, unrelated to military necessity, but nevertheless occurring in the context of total war and with the aim of producing ethnic cleansing.

In this definition of massacre the *number* of persons killed is excluded. However, Abdel Jawad (2007: 61) does not count instances of killing which are fewer than three persons killed when counting massacres. Thus the issue of *numbers* is included in the operationalization of counting massacres. Two different criteria for what is to be considered a massacre are emphasized in this definition, namely ‘military necessity’ and ‘the intention of ethnic cleansing’. With this definition, Abdel Jawad indirectly states that he does not count large indiscriminate killing which can be seen as guided by “military necessity”. This makes his definition of massacre quite narrow, and I will argue quite problematic, not least because of the difficulty of defining “military necessity”. Also, the point about “aim of producing ethnic cleansing” seems fairly costume made for Abdel Jawad’s research question and thus a definition articulated for the purposes of wanting a certain conclusion. However, it also seems superfluous since the decisive points are “against civilians” or “surrendered combatants” and “unrelated to military necessity”. Thus, would it have been for other and nobler causes than ethnic cleansing, the killing would still have been defined as a massacre if the two criteria of “against civilians/surrendered” and “unrelated to military necessity” were fulfilled.

#### *2.4.3 The Scope of Massacres in 1948*

Abdel Jawad (2007: 124) counts 68 Zionist massacres. This number is substantially more than Benny Morris’s count of 24 (Shavit, 2004). What makes the major difference between the two is unclear since Morris does not define what he considers to be a massacre. My suspicion, however, is that Morris has a higher threshold when it comes to the *amount* of persons killed for it to count as a massacre. I base my suspicion on the fact that it is this element of Abdel Jawad’s definition which is very different from other more commonly used definitions, and by relaxing this criterion the number of massacres is likely to go up. Another reason why Morris’ count is lower than Abdel Jawad’s may be their different approach to the use of sources. Abdel Jawad’s (2007) research relays much more on Palestinian oral history than Morris (2004a). Since this work is ongoing, the time from Abdel Jawad’s estimate in 2007 to Morris’ in 2004 may also have had an impact on their different numbers. When combining Palestinian oral history with Israeli documents, Ilan Pappé (2006: 258)

counts 31 confirmed massacres and claims that “there may have been at least another six”. The focus in the discussion in this thesis will be on the worst massacres in 1948 (see Chapter 4 and 5). Thus the precision of the definitions above are less important since the cases under scrutiny qualify in every way. Massacres where Jews were killed by Arabs might also be better understood through Vetlesen’s model, but this is outside the aim of this thesis. Massacres of Jews by Arabs – there were three of these in 1948 (Morris, 2004a: 7) – will be discussed only to the extent that they had an impact on the Zionist massacres. That is, the factors in focus in this thesis are those relevant for answering the question: *what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres of Palestinians during the 1948 Palestine War?* Vetlesen’s (2005) model on ‘collective evildoing’ will be the main theoretical framework for answering this research question.

# Chapter 3

## Theory

This chapter outlines Professor Arne Johan Vetlesen's (2005) model on "collective evildoing". This model is presented in his book *Evil and Human Agency* from 2005. In this book he proposes a synthesis between a functionalist and an intentionalist approach to understand collective evildoing, arriving at three explanatory factors: character, circumstance and social structure. The model focuses on the mental-logic of the perpetrators. The psychological mechanism can, in short, be understood as the logic of "transferring" vulnerability from one person/group (the perpetrators) to another person/group (the victims), through the means of inflicting pain and suffering. Such logic provides an incentive to commit atrocities. Ideological conditioning about identity and group-thinking is crucial. This chapter begins with a definition of evil and collective evildoing, followed by an outline of what I call 'Vetlesen's model'. Vetlesen's (2005) work provides perspectives on victims and by-standers, as well as perpetrator. The sole focus of this thesis is on the latter. This chapter ends with first making the observable implications of the model explicit before turning to a commentary about the differences between the empirical cases of Vetlesen's model and the Palestinian case, which is the topic of this thesis.

### 3.1 Definition

#### 3.1.1 What is Evildoing?

Vetlesen (2005: 2) defines evildoing as "to *intentionally inflict pain and suffering on another human being, against her will, and causing serious and foreseeable harm to her*". This definition seems quite strait forward, but some of the words here are worth discussing further, word such as "intention" and "serious harm". To take the last one first: It seems necessary to interpret "serious harm" as the harm of someone's essential preconditions for living a decent life. Even though a medical doctor might cause you pain and suffering against your will during an operation, and his acts are certainly intentional as the pain is foreseeable (see below about *intention*), it seems absurd to

call such deliberate acts evildoing. The reason for this, as I see it, is not just due to the expected benevolent motivation behind the act, but because of how we should interpret what “serious harm” means. In Vetlesen’s terminology, “serious harm” seems to me to mean harm against “human agency”. A doctor’s acts of inflicting pain would not be aimed at hurting the patient’s agency, i.e. his capacity to engage with the social world. Such capacity includes both life and identity.

It could be helpful to understand the definition of evildoing by pointing out what kind of violent acts is *not* considered evil. This is related to the first question about intentionality. The *intention* thought of in this context is *criminal intention*. *Criminal intent* is defined as “a conscious decision on the part of one party to injure or deprive another” (Law Dictionary). Criminal intent can be categorized as either “direct” or “oblique.” *Direct intent* is defined as “a desire to commit a specific act in the expectation that it will result in a specific outcome”. *Oblique intent*, on the other hand, is when an act is done with the knowledge that it *may* cause certain harmful consequences (Law Dictionary). If Vetlesen’s use of the word “intentionally” is meant in a broad sense, both in the direct and the oblique way, then violent acts that do not fall into the category of evildoing are those which are carried out unknowingly with no expectation or possible knowledge about the consequences. I interpret Vetlesen’s meaning of “intentionally” in a narrow sense, strictly as direct intent. However, I do not see this uncertainty as decisive for this thesis. What is important, however, is to differentiate between *intention* and *motivation*.

*Intention* must not be confused with *motivation* (i.e. the driving force behind the act). It is possible that they are closely linked, that inflicting pain and suffering on others becomes a goal in itself. This is associated with *sadistic behavior* which is an important issue in Vetlesen’s model on collective evildoing. Nonetheless it is not part of his *definition* of evildoing, as I read it, which thus separates intention from motivation. What about the definition of *collective* evildoing?



### 3.1.2 What is Collective Evildoing?

Vetlesen defines collective evildoing in contrast to individual evildoing:

[Individual evil] is about a concrete individual that chooses to hurt a particular other person as a decision made and an action taken for emphatically his or her reasons, reasons not involving group membership and group identity either as applying to oneself as actor or to the other as victim. [...] Collective evil, by contrast, is what we deal with in cases of evildoing where the individual agent from the very start sees himself as acting *on behalf of his group*, and so genuinely in his capacity as a group member... [In most cases]...this stance of the agent will correspond to his targeting his victim (*that* particular person) in her capacity as a *representative of her group*".

(Vetlesen 2005: 171-172)

According to this definition, it is the *thinking* of the perpetrator that is the defining factor for whether it should be understood as individual or collective evildoing. This means that one single person can commit collective evildoing. However, it seems clear that Vetlesen (2005) sees collective evildoing as something which a (whole) group takes part in – a collective – and therefore the definition above is incomplete. Vetlesen adds to his definition of collective evildoing: “evildoing as planned and performed by groups against other groups” (Vetlesen, 2005: 6). Thus, in order for something to be *collective* evildoing it has to be both an inter-group phenomenon *and* executed with a particular mentality (see definition above). With this definition as a start, how does Vetlesen’s model of explaining collective evildoing look like?

## 3.2 Vetlesen’s Model on Collective Evildoing

In his book, *Evil and Human Agency*, Vetlesen (2005) introduces and criticizes earlier thoughts and theories about evildoing. His focus is on three scholars which represents different academic strands; Zygmunt Bauman (sociology), Hannah Arendt (philosophy) and C. Fred Alford (psychology). By combining insight from these three scholars, and discussing it in relation to the Holocaust and ethnic cleansing atrocities in Bosnia, Vetlesen develops a comprehensive model for explaining and understanding cases of what he calls “collective evildoing”.

### 3.2.1 *The Model's Theoretical Background*

Vetlesen's (2005) model is presented as a critical alternative to better known approaches for understanding collective evil-doing, such as Hannah Arendt and Zygmunt Bauman. Arendt and Bauman represent different explanations for evil-doing, but both approaches share a common ground with the position represented by Stanley Milgram; explaining evil-doing as "*an – often unintended – by-product of obedience to authority*" (Vetlesen 2005: 5-6). Vetlesen admits that Bauman and Arendt have not got it all wrong, but argues that they make the explanation too one-dimensional. One aspect that is not taken into consideration by them, according to Vetlesen, is the importance of *ideology*. Vetlesen points out that even if you could explain the functioning of the extermination-camps of Nazi Germany in strictly functionalist terms, the *goal* of extermination itself remains unaccounted for (Vetlesen, 2005:50). Thus Vetlesen accuses Bauman and Arendt of underestimating the worldview of the perpetrators; a mindset very much affected by years of anti-Semitic propaganda and other racist ideas. In contrast to Bauman and Arendt, Vetlesen's model on collective evil-doing emphasizes the importance of *ideology* and its effect on the perpetrators' *intention*.

Vetlesen turns to psychologist C. Fred Alford for an "intentionalist" framework. Alford's model is applicable for explaining individual evil-doing. It emphasizes human nature's potential and abilities to act sadistically (Vetlesen, 2005:6). Alford's model challenges the inference made by Stanley Milgram about his experiments where the explanatory variable was solely "obedience to authority". Milgram's explanation was that the orders from authority enabled the perpetrator to enter a so-called *agentic* state, i.e. "the state in which the agent finds himself once responsibility has been shifted away by his consent to the superior's right to command" (Vetlesen, 2005: 18). Alford goes further and claims that the perpetrators *wanted* permission to hurt someone; they wanted to hurt someone without feeling responsible for it. Alford's explains: "The structure of the Milgram experiment protects them [the perpetrators] from knowledge of their own sadism, while allowing them to express it" (Alford in Vetlesen, 2005:

105). Alford's model on individual evil, which is the theoretical point of departure for Vetlesen's model on collective evil, can be summed up like this:

Evil [is] about the relief sought in placing the sense of vulnerability [...] onto another person, so as to be rid of it and be able to control it 'out there', in the other; it is to make external what originates as internal.

(Vetlesen, 2005: 106)

Vetlesen (2005: 105-106) claims that Alford makes an important step towards explaining that collective evil-doing – which is organized, top-down, and authorized – is not about avoiding or neutralizing people's emotions, but primarily about *exploiting* the motivations which is part of every individual. The vital insight provided by Alford's work is to look at evil as an existential issue: "evil is about something within our selves, it is about inner forces, anxieties, conflicts that we *have to* come to terms with" (Vetlesen, 2005: 142).

Even though Vetlesen finds Alford's perspective on evil-doing helpful and views it as a refreshing alternative to the mainstream theories on evil, he does not extol Alford's model. He claims that it is less useful in explaining *collective* evil-doing (Vetlesen, 2005:6). Alford's approach overlooks social factors such as culture and group identity, focusing primarily on human nature (Vetlesen, 2005: 129). Alford emphasizes the natural patterns of human character, i.e. the psychological conditions of how one tends to think, feel, and relate to others. By not taking the effect of social structure and particular situations into account, Alford's approach is also too one-dimensional, according to Vetlesen (2005: 141). Vetlesen emphasizes the importance of *ideology* for people's willingness to do evil, connects this to the Alford's approach on character, which together conditions the person's susceptibility to do evil. This combination of ideology and character (i.e. psychological conditions) appears to represent a synthesis between Alford's interpretation of Milgram's experiments, and psychologist Alex Haslam's interpretation of Milgram's experiments. Haslam concludes that it was the *idealists* who responded most willingly; those who believe it was for a good cause. While direct orders were not followed by others, only kind requests sufficed for these so-called idealists (Stenvik, 2013).

By adding a sociological perspective to Alford's psychological approach, collective evildoing is shown to have social origins as well as social consequences. A sense of collective vulnerability, insecurity and victimhood are social preconditions for collective evildoing, while a sense of collective strength, security and unity are the social results. Vetlesen's (2005) model thus explains how certain social structures and circumstances enable individuals in a group to become motivated perpetrators. So how do social structure and circumstance affect people's character? More precisely, *how do ideology and norms, war, and orders affect how people think and feel about responsibility, vulnerability, and violence?*

### 3.2.2 Evil and Human Agency

Vetlesen's (2005) model is a framework to better understand which elements of human agency *presuppose* collective evildoing as well as which are *suppressed* and *denied* when collective evildoing is committed. To the question of human agency in individual versus collective evildoing, Vetlesen argues that agency, and in turn responsibility, is often denied in both individual and collective evildoing.

[S]uppressing and bracketing *individual* agency when performing *collective* evil is both a crucial psychological precondition and a 'lived' consequence of such evildoing, [i.e.] the acting individual starts behaving *as though* he is not responsible for what he does.

(Vetlesen, 2005: 146-147)

An important structural factor in Vetlesen's model is *ideology*. Ideologies that emphasize group-identity are particularly attractive to those with a high sense of personal and/or collective vulnerability.

[T]he group helps the individual defend against both kinds of anxiety [...] by transforming private anxieties into shared ones, the group helps the individual [to] project his anxiety outward, where it may be confronted as an objective threat to the goodness of the group

(Alford in Vetlesen, 2005: 173)

So-called 'genocidal ideologies' play an important role in the mental conditioning of the perpetrators in collective evildoing. The similar elements in these 'genocidal ideologies' are, on the one side, the obsession with enemies, with defeats suffered, and

with imminent threats, and on the other, the obsession with its own group's "strength, solidarity, and moral determination" for victory in an inevitable war. These 'genocidal ideologies' present an either-or scenario where the only way to survive is by destroying the enemy (Vetlesen, 2005: 151). The enemy is thus defined in group-identity terms. Such ideology strengthens group-thinking to the extreme with a self-righteous victimhood in the core of the group's identity. This leads to ideas like 'your group is your destiny' and 'once a victim always a victim' (Vetlesen, 2005: 7). It enables the perpetrator not only to see his own actions as justified, but to bypass personal responsibility altogether.

Ideology also collectivizes guilt upon the enemy group; holding every individual member of the enemy group responsible for misdeeds allocated to it – real or imagined, past or present. By doing so, it also turns the enemy group into a *scapegoat* – a target where collective vulnerability can be 'transferred' from one's own group onto the enemy (Vetlesen, 2005: 7). In this way, the enemy group has a symbolic function. It represents the things the perpetrators fear within and between themselves (Vetlesen, 2005: 182). In making the target group weak and vulnerable through violence, feelings of weakness and vulnerability are felt to be externalized and '*transferred*' away from one's own group. As a result, feelings of strength are felt by the perpetrators. It is experienced as a zero-sum game: "the more you experience of what I find intolerable, the less of it I will have to bear myself" (Vetlesen, 2005: 113). This provides an *emotional* incentive to act violently against the selected Other *in addition to* any potential *political* incentives. Having presented the different parts of Vetlesen's model, an interesting question is to what extent the different parts of the model are dependent on each other; can some parts of Vetlesen's model be fruitful without the whole model being necessarily applied? This is important to avoid 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater'.

### 3.2.3 Summary

One aspect of *individual* evildoing is described in Vetlesen's model as similar to what motivates acts of *collective* evildoing. This psychological mechanism can, in short, be understood as the logic of "transferring" vulnerability, mortality and insecurity from

one person/group (the perpetrators) to another person/group (the victims), through the means of inflicting pain and suffering. The perpetrators experience this “transfer” of vulnerability when they inflict pain and suffering on the chosen Other, i.e. the enemy person/group. A short term sense of strength, immortality, and security is felt by the perpetrators. This occurs in collective evildoing because personal identity is closely linked to the group’s identity. This effect is due to ideological conditioning which makes little room for separating personal identity from collective identity. Such strong collective identity has also another effect on the perpetrators. Not only feelings of weakness and strength are felt by the perpetrators as something collective, but also a sense of responsibility and guilt. When the identity of the perpetrators is so closely linked to their group, the atrocious acts they commit are experienced as something they are not responsible for personally. Thus, they do not feel guilty about it. The mental logic is that they are acting *on behalf of* their group.

Which factors produce collective evildoing? General factors: circumstance, structure, character. Particular factors: a situation with a heightened *feeling of insecurity* and *orders* from authority; a structure of ‘genocidal’ *ideology*; and a strong feeling of *collective identity* and *vulnerability*. Taken together, it is a situation where personal survival, the group’s survival, and demographic purity are all seen as being under immediate threat, and seen to be basically the same issue. Collective evil “is always seen to be a deliberate action carried out *for the sake of* protecting some superior yet threatened ‘good’ – [...] especially at times of crisis [often presented by group leaders as] putting the sheer *survival* of the group into question” (Vetlesen, 2005: 185).

### **3.3 Concluding Thoughts**

#### *3.3.1 Vetlesen’s Model: My Assessment*

I interpret Vetlesen’s model as *one* comprehensive explanation consisting of two parts which could work independently. First, explaining how human agency is collectivized – which includes identity, responsibility, and guilt – is helpful to understand the views of the perpetrators, both of themselves and of their victims. Thus the mechanism of *group-thinking* is important to understand how representatives of the enemy-group

become legitimate targets, and how feelings of revenge are derived from attacks on representatives of your group. This part of the model is by itself an alternative explanation of collective evildoing to the Milgram-Arendt-Bauman approach, which emphasizes the “obedience to authority”-explanation. It can hardly be called a new approach, but it explains the psychological and sociological mechanisms more thoroughly and particularly than, say, Jonathan Glover’s (2001: 141-149) idea of “tribalism”, which points to a similar mechanism as a cause to collective evildoing.

Second, the part of Vetlesen’s model which is derived from Alford about ‘transferring’ vulnerability is certainly an independent explanation for *individual* evildoing. Not for *collective* evildoing, however. In order for it to apply on cases of *collective* evildoing it needs the part about group-thinking described above in order to make sense. On the other hand, the explanation above does *not* necessitate the “transfer of vulnerability”-explanation to be fruitfully applied on collective evildoing, even in such cases where feelings of revenge are present. To explain such cases does not necessitate that the perpetrator *also* is driven by a desire to externalize internal vulnerability (what I call the ‘second part’ of Vetlesen’s model). These two perspectives go well together, but in my opinion they are potentially two distinct explanations where the first does not necessitate the second, and where the second is only dependent on the first in order for it to apply on cases of *collective* evildoing. When discussing the Palestinian case in Chapter 5, it is made explicit which parts of Vetlesen’s model the provided evidence supports in particular.

Given that factors of ideology and character as more fixed than orders and insecurity, it follows that the factor of *circumstance* is the explanatory variable to expect most variation. With regard to measurement problems, to identify the existence of the *orders* given is arguably easier than to identify the level of insecurity. This makes the explanatory variable “Orders” the best variable with regard to the selection of massacres to be analyze in depth (more on this in Chapter 4).

### 3.3.2 Observable Implications

The main observable implication taken from Vetlesen's model is acts of *excessive* violence. Such excess is indicated by public humiliation, rape and abuse, and killing of non-threatening individuals (e.g. children); acts which are less obviously explained with regard to military necessity. Such excessive violence, seemingly unnecessary and irrational, is an indicator that the perpetrator has a *desire* to inflict pain and suffering on his victim. Given that such excessive behavior is beyond any order given, such behavior is arguably poorly understood by the "obedience to authority"-explanation. It is also in cases of excessive violence where the "transfer of vulnerability"- part of Vetlesen's model is most fruitful, particularly if such violence is *ritualized*. Excessiveness is not a precondition for Vetlesen's model's applicability, but it strengthens it vis-à-vis alternative explanations such as "obedience to authority".

When the perpetrator sees himself as acting *on behalf of* his group – a precondition for it being *collective* evildoing –responsibility and guilt are seen as allocated to the group level. This is another observable implication of Vetlesen's model. Group-thinking is also indicated when security is seen in terms of identity and demography. So when feelings of *fear* and *revenge* appear to be derived from the collective history of the group, its present situation, and/or the expected future of the group as such, then Vetlesen's model appears to be fruitful vis-à-vis alternative explanations such as "obedience to authority".

Vetlesen's model is primarily based on two cases of collective evildoing: the Holocaust and the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. By applying this model on the Palestine case, this thesis faces the problem to indirectly put the three cases on an equal footing – representing the *Nakba* as equivalent to the *Shoa*<sup>5</sup>, both in nature and in scope, and not just by name. Comparative analyses of quite distinct phenomenon might often be fruitful. In this case, however, it would probably be more distracting than helpful, and lead to polemic conclusions rather than to deeper understanding. So without getting

---

<sup>5</sup> *Shoa* is the Hebrew word for 'Catastrophe' used about the Holocaust, just as *al-Nakba* is the Arabic word for 'Catastrophe' used about the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948.



too much into the exercise of “comparing tragedies”, a few words about it is called for. And if the term ‘genocide’ is not appropriate for describing the Nakba, what label is?

### 3.3.3 *Comparing and Labeling Cases of Collective Evildoing*

For those who seek to emphasize the severity of the Nakba, it is tempting to compare it with the Holocaust, particularly since Jews are an important audience when discussing the Nakba. However,

by equating Zionists with Nazis one makes no distinction between colonialist usurpation of a territory and the racist extermination of whole populations

(Achcar, 2011: 128)

“[The Palestinians cannot] legitimately apply to their own case the superlatives appropriate to the Jewish genocide”. Even compared with other colonial cases, the atrocities against the Palestinians were not exceptionally brutal. One example is the massacres in Algeria by the French army in May 1945, where “several thousand Algerians [...] were massacred [in two cities] in the space of a few weeks” (Achcar, 2011: 31).

Comparing the ethnic cleansing in Palestine with the ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia makes much more sense than comparing it to the Holocaust. Ilan Pappé (2006) does this in order to show that the *definition* of ‘ethnic cleansing’ should apply for the Palestinian case as well. However, the Yugoslavian case was much more murderous than the Palestinian case – the death toll raging far higher<sup>6</sup>. Benny Morris emphasize this difference when he states that “[Deir Yassin] was no Srebrenica” – rightfully pointing out that a massacre of about 8000 people is significantly different from that of 100 (Morris in Achcar, 2011: 32). The *number* of people murdered is not the *only* significant way of measuring the severity of a case, but it is significant. Another important feature making the Yugoslavian case different from the Palestinian case is the so-called ‘rape/death camps’ where so-called ‘genocidal rape’ were institutionalized (Vetlesen, 2005: 197). The term ‘ethnic cleansing’ might fit the 1948

---

<sup>6</sup> Approximately 100,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed by Serbs in 1992-95 (Mønnesland, 2008: 349).

Palestine War, but this term appears to be quite broad – not able to distinguish the Nakba from more genocidal cases.

According to Michael Mann's (2005: 12) typology on ethnic cleansing, genocides are characterized as *total* in terms of cleansing, and *premeditated mass killing* in terms of violence. Genocide becomes a form of '*murderous* ethnic cleansing'. The ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948, seen as a whole, is better characterized as *partial* and *repressive*, where the outcome is 'violent settlement/displacement'. This category is part of "a borderline zone in which [*murderous* ethnic cleansing] may occasionally occur" (Mann, 2005: 12). Thus the massacres committed by Jewish soldiers can generally be seen as instances of such *murderous* ethnic cleansing. Given that (murderous) ethnic cleansing fits the definition of collective evildoing, it follows that collective evildoing is not a category reserved for genocidal forms of ethnic cleansing such as the cases discussed by Vetlesen (2005) – in Bosnia, in Rwanda, and the Holocaust. So what term fits a non-genocidal case of ethnic cleansing such as the Nakba?

Palestinian scholar, Nur Masalha, uses the term 'politicide' for describing certain kinds of killing that took place in 1948 Palestine (more on politicide in Chapter 5). He also uses the term 'cultural genocide', which refers to the "destruction and elimination of the cultural pattern of a group" (Masalha, 2012: 10-11). Typical indicators of cultural genocide are destruction of buildings, cultural sites, and whole villages – even changing their names. This was widespread in Palestine in 1948 and after, as part of Zionist policies (Pappé, 2006: 225-234). A central motive for intentionally destroying the Palestinian society *as such* was to prevent a return of the Palestinian refugees, and thus to make their absence permanent (Morris, 2004a: 348).

In my view, the best term for describing the 1948 Nakba is 'sociocide', i.e. "the killing of a society's capacity to survive and to reproduce itself (Galtung, 2012). This goes beyond the destruction of culture and identity, thus beyond 'cultural genocide'. 'Sociocide' includes the destruction of security, economic sustainability, and political autonomy (Galtung, 2012). Such a label fits well for the 1948 Palestine War as a whole. Even though important differences between the cases analyzed by Vetlesen

(2005) and the Palestinian case exist, Vetlesen's model on 'collective evildoing' might still be helpful in explaining the 1948 War in general and the massacres in particular. *How* to analyze this subject is the topic for the next chapter.

# Chapter 4

## Research Design

This chapter will outline the methodological choices made in this thesis. It will show why certain cases have deserved a particular focus. What is referred to as cases here are instances of massacres during the *1948 Palestine War*. The “expulsion order context”- explanation will be the hypothesis in focus when cases are selected for scrutiny. Other considerations guiding the selection are *representativeness* and *available data*. Before moving to the specific considerations of this thesis, some general methodological considerations are called for.

### 4.1 General Methodological Considerations

#### 4.1.1 *The Level and Form of Analysis*

Historians have shown that several massacres occurred in Palestine during the *1948 War*. This thesis will focus on explaining *why* the massacres happened. There are different types of explanations for why certain events occur. Østerud (2007: 17) identifies three types: causal, intentional and functional. This thesis will for the most part be about causal and intentional explanations, but will also discuss possible functional explanations (e.g. how the massacres fuelled the Palestinian exodus and thus had a *function* for the broader Zionist aim).

This thesis will also shift between macro and micro level explanations. Most historians who have written about the *1948 War* have operated on the macro level; explaining the atrocities and the flight of Palestinians by pointing to factors regarding Palestine as a whole (Pappé in Masalha, 2012: 225). Benny Morris’s (2004a) main study may be seen as an exception given the scope of his work. Even though his approach is on the macro level, it includes many details on the micro level. My view is that different levels of analyses are important for explaining the massacres. My first approach will be on the micro level – focusing on local circumstantial causes within certain massacres – before turning to the macro level focusing on structural causes –

emphasizing ideology and historical experience in relation to character, i.e. psychological conditioning. However, the case-selection is designed in a way that it provides macro-level implications. It is guided by theoretical expectations about a *general* explanation. This means that case study methods are applicable.

#### 4.1.2 Case Studies

Both the research question and the model applied to answer it favor a *qualitative* approach. The model applied in this thesis – Vetlesen’s model – presents a causal chain which focuses on the causal *mechanisms* rather than the *strength* of these relationships. It also presents several intervening variables. A case study method has favorable features in this respect.

Case studies examine the operation of causal mechanisms in individual cases in detail. Within a single case, we can look at a large number of intervening variables and inductively observe any unexpected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism [...] Researchers can also use theories on causal mechanisms to give historical explanations of cases [...] Another advantage of case studies is their ability to accommodate complex causal relations such as equifinality [and interaction].

(George and Bennett, 2005: 21-22)

The limitation of cases studies is that they cannot say much about *how much* impact a particular independent variable has, and only tentative conclusions are possible. Furthermore, since it allows for equifinality – i.e. “many alternative causal paths to the same outcome” – the ability to generalize the findings is smaller. Thus to generalize causal effects and to measure causal weight of variables is better done by large-N studies, i.e. statistical studies. Case studies are good at identifying scope conditions of theories and establishing whether particular variables are necessary or sufficient, or at least whether a variable can be seen as a *contributing cause*. But the measure of *how much* the variable contributes remains uncertain for such a study (George and Bennett, 2005: 10-27). Another methodological aspect of case studies is *process-tracing*.

The process-tracing method attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.

(George and Bennett, 2005: 206)

Process-tracing is useful for theory testing and theory development since many observations within a single case is linked together in a certain way in order to *explain* the outcome. This makes it different from methods of covariance or comparisons across cases (George and Bennett, 2005: 207). So how do these general methodological considerations affect the case selection of this thesis?

## 4.2 Case Selection

### 4.2.1 Hypotheses

Given that a ‘case’ is “an instance of a class of events” (George and Bennett, 2005: 17), the ‘1948 Palestine War’ can certainly be seen as *one* case; one instance which is part of a class of, say, ‘wars’ or ‘ethnic cleansing’. Since the research question of this thesis is about the Jewish soldiers in particular, what are referred to as cases here are instances of *massacres* perpetrated by Jewish soldiers. However, I take the general explanations for the Palestine case as a whole as a point of departure for generating hypotheses.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2, the variables emphasized by historians as general explanations for events occurring in the 1948 War are, on the one side, an intentionalist explanation caused by ideology, and on the other, a functionalist explanation caused by the circumstances of war. Having settled on some sort of combination of these factors for explaining the decisions of the leadership, the soldiers’ decisions and *the impact of orders* remain unexplained. One hypothesis is that the massacres resulted from “soldiers following orders”. Another hypothesis is that the massacres resulted from “soldiers’ own initiatives”. This is *one level* of hypotheses. They represent a dichotomy: either the massacres were caused by orders or they were not. However, by connecting this question to the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 – Vetlesen’s model – which argues for a synthesis between these hypotheses, the question then is less on *if* orders had an impact and more on *how much* and *in what way* orders had an impact. These questions represent a different *level* of hypotheses. This thesis will focus on “*in what way* orders had an impact”, thus identifying the causal *mechanisms*.

The second level of hypotheses differentiate in *how* orders had an impact on the outcome of massacres rather than *if* they had an impact. One hypothesis is that orders had a contributing effect on the massacres due to “**obedience to authority**”. This hypothesis is in line with Milgram-Bauman-Arendt. Another hypothesis for explaining the causal mechanisms is that orders were seen as “**a welcomed authorization** to act brutally without feelings of responsibility”. This hypothesis is in line with Alford-Vetlesen (see Chapter 3).

An important approach in this thesis for establishing causal mechanisms is process-tracing. The discussion in Chapter 5 will start on the micro-level; focusing on one particular massacre. Then, in line with Vetlesen’s model, the focus of the discussion will ‘zoom out’ and become more general, both in space and time – connecting particular massacres to broader military operations, as well as tracing the chain of events back in time focusing on structural causes. The case-selection below is based on the assumption that *orders* played an important role in causing Jewish soldiers to commit massacres. The question then is what kind of order represents a *typical* context for massacres in Palestine in 1948?

#### 4.2.2 *Typical Cases – The Expulsion Order Context*

To my knowledge there is no evidence of explicit orders of massacres per se from the centralized command. There are examples of orders of expulsion, however, and most massacres happened in the context of expulsion operations. The fact that these massacres often followed a similar pattern opens up for the inference that the perpetrators followed particular guidelines from the top or at least that the local commanders were under the impression that the massacres were *authorized* by the Zionist leadership (Morris, 1999a: 73). This implies that orders played an important role in causing the massacres. It is important to make a distinction between *direct orders* and *authorization*; the latter necessitates a stronger emphasis on other explanatory factors, e.g. ideology.

Operation Hiram in the north of Palestine in October 1948 is the best example of the significant impact an expulsion order had on the level of massacres. In an interview

with Ari Shavit (2004), Benny Morris confirmed that “in Operation Hiram there was a comprehensive and explicit expulsion order”. He claimed that as much as half of the 24 massacres perpetrated by Jewish soldiers were part of Operation Hiram. Morris concluded:

Apparently, various officers who took part in the operation understood that the expulsion order they received permitted them to do these [atrocities] in order to encourage the [Palestinians to flee]

(Morris in Shavit, 2004)

Given the correctness of this inference, the orders were seen more as *authorization* than direct orders for perpetrating massacres. However, the orders in question are between the central command and the local command, not between the local command and the soldiers. Thus, the orders given by the local commanders to the soldiers may have been direct orders for massacres rather than merely authorization of such. The orders given at this *micro level* are too numerous and too poorly documented to be guiding any case-selection. So as a starting-point, the orders issued from the centralized command will be the reference point when selecting cases for scrutiny.

The massacres which occurred in an “expulsion order”-context represent *one* group of massacres during the *1948 War*. The fact that most massacres occurred within such a context makes them so-called *typical cases* (Gerring, 2007: 91-93). In this regard, they are *representative* per definition and points to the “orders”-hypothesis as central. However, even though the “expulsion order”-context may be a significant explanatory variable, it is not a *sufficient* one. In many, probably most, of the villages conquered during Operation Hiram, massacres did *not* occur (Morris, 2004a: 482). Thus, other factors must have played a role for why certain villages experienced massacres and others not. The *other* villages are so-called *negative cases* – where the variation is on the dependent variable, i.e. no massacres occurring.

Negative cases will not be in focus in this thesis. This is because the second level of hypotheses is interested in the *causal mechanisms*, and the observable implications of Vetlesen’s (2005) model for identifying causal mechanisms point to the *behavior* of the perpetrators. Furthermore, beyond the “expulsion order”-context – which is measureable from case to case – the explanatory variables provided by Vetlesen’s



model are all very *general* and could potentially affect every Jewish soldier equally, e.g. ideology and a sense of collective identity. In this way, to find variation on one of these explanatory variables, except from particular orders, is unlikely. For this reason, all negative cases seem less relevant although they are not *irrelevant*<sup>7</sup>. Thus, no other variables are prioritized in the *initial* case selection process than the “expulsion order”-context. After having analyzed the first case, other considerations arise, e.g. the particular commander or the time-period of the war.

Another question is whether the “expulsion order”-context was *necessary* for the massacres to occur. To find out the degree of necessity of an expulsion order for massacres to occur, the focus is directed towards *a deviant case*. A ‘deviant case’ in this context is a massacre which occurred in a context where an expulsion order was absent. By discussing a deviant case, the “orders”-hypothesis is tested with variation on its main explanatory variable. The aim of such an analysis is not merely to prove necessity, but to develop a hypothesis before moving to the next case. The best place to look for a massacre that took place without a centralized expulsion order is to look at the massacres perpetrated by the dissident paramilitary groups – Irgun and Stern.

#### 4.2.3 *Deviant Cases – Dissident Massacres*

The early massacres initiated by the dissident guerrilla groups, Irgun and Stern<sup>8</sup>, represent to some extent massacres executed without the context of an expulsion order. I say “to some extent” because even though they represent dissident behavior vis-à-vis the mainstream leadership of the Zionist movement (i.e. the government, the Jewish Agency, and the Haganah), they might have received orders from the leaders of their own groups. Nevertheless, any massacre which took place in the absence of a centralized expulsion order represents a separate group of cases, and the so-called *dissident massacres* – which were often publicly denounced and criticized by the Zionist leadership – are an important indicator of such cases. The Deir Yassin massacre is the most important example of a dissident massacre and much data about it is available. So in an effort to analyze the causes of the massacres where orders of

---

<sup>7</sup> See Mahoney and Goertz (2004) on irrelevant and negative cases.

<sup>8</sup> *The Stern Gang* is also called *LEHI* or just *Stern*.

expulsion were *absent*, the Deir Yassin massacre will be the first case discussed in Chapter 5. Other dissident massacres will also briefly be described.

The fact that the Deir Yassin massacre occurred in the absence of an expulsion order makes it a so-called *deviant case*. The Deir Yassin massacre is thus *not* representative. A deviant case study is useful for generating new hypotheses (Gerring, 2007: 105). A new hypothesis which may arise from this case study can in turn be tested on typical cases. Vetlesen's (2005) model will be the main tool for explaining the causes of this massacre. The study of the Deir Yassin massacre is meant to generate a clear alternative hypothesis which is expected to be in line with Vetlesen's model. This hypothesis is not meant to challenge the "expulsion order context"-explanation, but rather to suggest the causal mechanisms at play. And also get a clearer idea of what *additional* factors contributed in causing the massacres. The other factor identified will then be sought found and analyzed in 'typical cases'. In an effort to control for factors such as region, commander, brigade, and time-period of the war when selecting these typical cases, I select three different military operations where centralized expulsion orders were issued. Within each expulsion operation, the focus will be on the worst massacre. Why focus on the worst massacre?

The case selection will favor the cases with the most victims and the most perpetrators. By doing so, particular factors that could be attributed to particular individuals are more likely to be avoided. This helps to avoid *bias* due to few observations<sup>9</sup> within each case (Gerring, 2007: 211) What makes these cases representative then is that they occur within an "expulsion order"-context. They are *not* representative, however, *within* each operation. Within each operation they are extreme cases (Gerring, 2007: 214). The trade-off here is between external and internal validity; the issue of representativeness improves *external* validity (a concern respected by selecting massacres from within an "expulsion order"-context), and maximizing victims and especially perpetrators improves *internal* validity due to more observations within each case (Gerring, 2007: 217). Since external validity presuppose internal validity, the favoring of the so-called "worst cases" seems appropriate.

---

<sup>9</sup> 'Observations' in this case are actors/agents. More perpetrators increase the *sample* of perpetrators which controls for bias based on individual characteristics.

Another reason why selecting the largest massacres is that these are more likely to be well documented. With the exception of Saliha, the three other massacres selected for scrutiny have much available data. So when discussing the Saliha massacre in Chapter 5, the focus will be more on the operation as a whole rather than on the Saliha massacre in particular, i.e. Operation Hiram. This brings up the question of the sources: what kind of sources will be used in this thesis, and what is available?

## 4.3 Sources

### 4.3.1 *Types of Sources*

There are two groups of empirical evidence for explaining what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres in 1948. One is what I call *objective indicators*. These are the actual acts of the soldiers: descriptions of how and under what circumstances the killing took place, whether acts of torture or rape were involved, if orders were issued, and so on. Such objective indicators are described by historians and can thus be found in secondary literature.

The other group of empirical evidence I call *subjective indicators*. These are what the perpetrators say about their own behavior: how they explain it, justify it, and so on, based on their own introspection. Such subjective indicators are expressed in interviews (or testimonies) or through diaries and similar sources where the perpetrators could describe *in their own words* what made them act as they did. In this thesis subjective indicators are found in interviews/testimonies of Jewish soldiers who participated in massacres. In the last section of the discussion in Chapter 5 the focus shifts from *particular* massacres and operations to a more *general* discussion on the war as a whole (macro level). It is this section which will see the most use of testimonies from Jewish soldiers – explaining in their own words what caused them to commit atrocities.

### 4.3.2 *Available Data*

The sources used to answer the research question of this thesis are to a large extent the studies which have already been criticized for not providing a sufficient *explanation* for the massacres. These sources are still the best available for further analyses of the

massacres, providing description and documentation, if not a comprehensive explanation. The available Israeli sources most relevant for this thesis are: Benny Morris' (2004a) *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*, and Ilan Pappé's (2006) *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. The available Palestinian sources most relevant for this thesis are Saleh Abdel Jawad's (2007) census of the massacres based primarily on Palestinian oral history. The recorded interviews of Jewish soldiers from 1948, organized by both Israelis and Palestinians, are also available and highly relevant for this thesis. They were documented by an organization called *Zochrot* in 2010. In 2012 *Zochrot* collaborated with an organization called "A Common Archive, Palestine 1948", and together they recoded some relevant testimonies discussed in this thesis. However, such testimonies are few. For understandable reasons, it is not many ex-soldiers who are willing to talk openly and seemingly honest about their atrocious acts in 1948. In this respect, these few testimonies become even more valuable and they represent an important source for answering the research question of this thesis. Additionally, they were recorded fairly recently and have, to my knowledge, not before been used for analytical purposes the way they are in this thesis. These testimonies are the main source for so-called *subjective indicators* described above. All the sources mentioned here, together with many other secondary sources – about the 1948 War and the history preceding it – are the empirical basis for my analysis. These are sources on both the micro and macro level. Now that the research design for this thesis is established, the focus can turn to answering the research question – what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres in Palestine in 1948? This will be discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter 5

## Discussion

In this chapter I will discuss massacres perpetrated by Jewish soldiers during the *1948 Palestine War* in relation to Vetlesen's (2005) model on collective evildoing. As concluded in Chapter 4, the cases prioritized for scrutiny are: first, the Deir Yassin massacre due to the lack of expulsion orders preceding it (a deviant case), second; three different expulsion operations – Dani, Yoav and Hiram – focusing on the largest massacre within each operation. After having discussed particular massacres and operations, the perspective becomes more general where testimonies by Jewish soldiers are in focus. What this discussion will show is that orders of expulsion increased the level of massacres, but that such orders were neither sufficient nor necessary for massacres to occur. It will show that factors such as ideology, a sense of vulnerability, and feelings of revenge played a significant role for causing Jewish soldiers to commit massacres. It will show that Vetlesen's model on 'collective evildoing' provides an explanation on *how* these factors affect each other. This chapter will ultimately seek to answer the question: *what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres of Palestinians in the 1948 Palestine War?*

### 5.1 Deir Yassin: The Infamous Massacre of 1948

#### 5.1.1 *A Result of Tactics or Revenge?*

The most known and recognized massacre of 1948 happened in Deir Yassin, a small town outside of Jerusalem. This massacre became known quickly within the Palestinian community and was arguably the most important single event to urge Palestinians into flight (see Morris, 2004: 237-240). This is reflected in a testimony of a Jewish Palmach<sup>10</sup> soldier:

---

<sup>10</sup> Palmach was "the strike force of the Haganah" (Morris, 2004a: 3).

In most cases, they [the Palestinians] fled due to fear, which intensified after the Dir Yassin incident (sic.). Clearly Dir Yassin is a watershed! Indeed, when our prisoners were driven from the Gush to Hebron, what did they shout at them on the way? Dir Yassin! That is Dir Yassin intensified their fear.

(Zochrot, 2012c)

The Deir Yassin massacre was also an important factor for the Arab League to recognize the need of sending regular troops into Palestine. It also provided legitimacy for King Abdullah's expansion of Transjordan into the West Bank with the aim of annexation. He explicitly stated in his telegrams to Arab heads of state, when the Arab Legion entered into Palestine on May 15, that one of the main goals of this intervention was to prevent a repetition of Deir Yassin (Rogan, 2001: 111).

The number of Palestinians killed in this massacre was initially estimated to be 254, stated by the Jewish Agency, the Red Cross and others. However, this estimate is now brought down to around 100, believing the initial figure to be deliberately inflated by both Jewish and Arab leaders (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 105; Pappé, 2006: 271, n.8; Waage, 2013: 133, n.368). The fact that both 'sides' had a common interest in presenting the Deir Yassin massacre as larger than it really was makes the huge impact the Deir Yassin incident had on the Palestinian population more understandable. The brutalities became public knowledge, partly because it was used in Zionist propaganda in the weeks following the massacre. The aim was to cause fear among the Palestinians which would lead them into flight (Waage, 2013: 134).

The massacre took place in several stages between April 9 and 11. This was a few days after Plan D had been launched and the Haganah had gone on the offensive. It was, however, the paramilitary groups Irgun and Stern who took the initiative of attacking Deir Yassin; 80 Irgun and 40 Stern troopers (Morris, 2004a: 237). One of the main aims of the attack was to improve "Jewish morale" in Jerusalem and elsewhere. This context makes Abdel Jawad (2007: 67) claim that "[t]he brutality in Deir Yassin must be understood within the struggle for Jerusalem", thus pointing to tactical considerations. However, a different explanation for why Deir Yassin in particular came to be the target appears to have been that the Irgun operation chief, Goldshmidt, wanted to avenge attacks from Deir Yassin against the neighboring suburb, Givat

Shaul, where he had grown up – attacks which had occurred during the 1920s and the 1930s (Hogan, 2001: 313). This explanation is not about tactics, but about emotions such as *revenge*. What about the Jewish soldiers participating in the Deir Yassin massacre? Were they initially driven by orders and tactics, or by more enthusiastic emotions such as revenge? What was the order prior to the attack on Deir Yassin?

### 5.1.2 Following Orders or Requesting Authorization?

At the time of the massacre, Deir Yassin was an Arab Muslim community with around 750 inhabitants. It was located inside the area around Jerusalem which the UN had proposed to be an international zone. The Deir Yassin community had a non-belligerency agreement with its Jewish neighbors. Irgun and Stern were aware of this peaceful relationship. To take over Deir Yassin was part of Haganah's plans too, but was not considered a priority. They did, however, reluctantly approve the Irgun/Stern initiative to attack Deir Yassin. The guerrilla forces got a green light from the Haganah Jerusalem commander to carry out the operation (Morris, 2004a: 237). The guerrilla fighter thus got a reluctant approval to *occupy* Deir Yassin, but no order of *expulsion* was ever issued. Some *authorization* was therefore present. However, a reluctant approval for occupation is something very different from an expulsion order, and even more so from an order to commit massacre.

Irgun and Stern had internal planning discussions prior to the attack on Deir Yassin. The attitudes then was that they favored “liquidation of all men in the village and any other [opposing force], whether it be old people, women, or children” (Hogan, 2001: 313-315). Notwithstanding such prior attitudes, Benny Morris (2004a: 238) concludes that

the dissidents did not go in with the intention of committing a massacre but lost their heads during the protracted combat. But from the first, [Irgun's] intention had been to expel the inhabitants.

So even though an expulsion order was not issued, the *intention* of the dissidents was to expel the inhabitants.

As mentioned above, one factor for why Deir Yassin was targeted in the first place was the wishes of the Irgun operation chief to take *revenge*. This motivation was based

on experiences from his childhood and promises to his father (Hogan, 2001: 313). However, ideology may have played a key role in his thinking since the Deir Yassin population was *collectively* held responsible for the past. At least for the operation chief, the factor of revenge on the people of Deir Yassin was present from the outset. As for the rest of the fighters, it appears that the factor of revenge on the Deir Yassin population specifically became strong only *after* the initial battle had failed.

After the combat tensions had cooled off, the massacre continued, but this time in a different fashion. In this phase the context of war and the ideological conditioning of the fighters probably played a more significant role. Rhetoric such as “a good Arab was a dead Arab” was present at this stage of the war (Hogan, 2001: 331). Extreme attitudes were particularly common for members of the dissident groups, Irgun and Stern. Such ideas were also articulated by their leaders. One example of this is the founder of the Stern Gang, Avraham Stern, who had stated that Arabs were “nothing but murderers” (Hogan, 2001: 331). All this indicates that both *group-thinking* and internal emotions such as *revenge* were present during the Deir Yassin massacre. What about the mental-logic of ‘transferring’ vulnerability?

### 5.1.3 *Transferring Vulnerability?*

The attack on Deir Yassin resulted in indiscriminate mass killing, and executions of prisoners. The first killings were during the battle and were followed by more systematic atrocities. Several but an unknown amount of women were raped. Surviving Palestinian men, women and children were put in trucks and paraded around Jerusalem’s Jewish quarters, allegedly for increasing the Jewish morale in the city. The men were subsequently taken back near Deir Yassin and shot (Hogan, 2001: 323-326; Jawad, 2007: 105). The parading of victims this way can, with the help of Vetlesen’s (2005) model, be understood as a *desire* to inflict public humiliation on representatives of the target group. The act of humiliating your victim is a symbolic way of “transferring” weakness from your group to the target group – a group which not only is separate from your own, but represents something particularly bad. Such “badness” of the target group could come from ideology (structure), emphasized by Vetlesen (2005). But it could also come from the battle itself (circumstance). The likely



interpretation in this case, which is in line with Vetlesen's model, is that of a combination: The situation with a heightened sense of insecurity and vulnerability provided the final "push" to *legitimate* extraordinary use of violence, where the *desire* to inflict pain upon the target-victim comes from the inter-play between ideology, experience and human nature, i.e. *character*.

All in all, such a motivation goes beyond a pragmatic exercise of strengthening the "Jewish morale". The observable implications of Vetlesen's model, outlined in Chapter 3, explicitly points to factors such as public humiliation, rape, and excessive abuse and killing, which were all present in this particularly notorious massacre. And facts such as "thirty babies were among the slaughtered" (Pappé, 2006: 90-91) makes the Deir Yassin massacre appear as a clear cut case of collective evildoing, at least in terms of who were seen as legitimate targets.

The independent scholar, Matthew Hogan (2001: 331), points to three different mental states of the perpetrators, which corresponds to three different phases of the massacre. The first phase of the fighting was characterized by chaos; a situation gone out of control. The untrained, poorly equipped, disorganized guerilla teenagers attacked Deir Yassin and killed Arabs indiscriminately out of anger and *fear* when fighting began the morning of April 9. After meeting some resistance and after a few Jewish fighters were killed, *revenge* became a more salient motivational force for the Jewish troopers. In addition to this, they needed help from their "rivals", Haganah and Palmach, to win the battle. This made Irgun and Stern look ineffective and very unprofessional (Hogan, 2001: 331). Since this was *humiliating* for the dissident forces, it might have increased the urge of inflicting pain and humiliation on the Deir Yassin population as a mean "to get rid of" this collective humiliation. Viewed in this way, the in-group/out-group perspective may have intensified from being Jews and Arabs/Muslims in general to being Stern/Irgun-Jews and Deir Yassin-Arabs/Muslims in particular – creating a *double* group-think mechanism, which is in line with the idea that combat creates strong feelings of comradeship (Glover, 2001: 59). So taking the special context of the initially failed mission of the dissidents into account, it seems that *circumstantial* factors, combined with *structural* ideological factors of group-thinking and 'a license

to kill', caused these Jewish soldiers to commit massacre. However, even though the situation points to feelings of fear and revenge as explanatory factors, the actual *causal mechanisms* are not explained. Why would killing babies and raping girls feel like a compensation for a sense of vulnerability and feelings of revenge?

Vetlesen's model provides an answer. The Stern/Irgun forces arguably felt vulnerable and humiliated *as a group*. Simultaneously, the Deir Yassin population was seen as the appropriate target for collective emotional relief. The suggestive causal mechanisms are that the Jewish soldiers were seeking to "transfer" vulnerability and humiliation from their own group to the victims. It is plausible that they viewed the Deir Yassin population as a group on its own, but at the same time as representatives of Palestinians in general. In this way the ideological structures and the general context of the war on the one hand, and the particular context of the battle and the moods of revenge on the other, were likely to have reinforced each other and made the outcome so atrocious. Such an explanation includes a certain *character* of the perpetrators which is characterized by a *desire* to hurt a specific other. Ideology is a crucial structural factor for conditioning a mentality which makes atrocious behavior against the specific other seem *legitimate* and as an appropriate *solution* to internal vulnerability. The battle itself may also have brutalized the soldiers. This point is in line with the idea that brutalization is the *effect* rather than the *cause* of combat (Browning in Glover, 2001: 349). The specific situation heightened the feelings of revenge and vulnerability which seems to be the main cause for the Deir Yassin massacre, rather than feelings of duty or obedience to authority. But in the absence of direct orders, didn't the Jewish soldiers feel *responsible* for the atrocious acts?

#### 5.1.4 Feelings of Responsibility

The causes behind the Deir Yassin massacre indicated above show that multiple factors played their role: ideological attitudes conditioned the fighters prior to the battle; events occurring during the battle; and, even though an order of expulsion appears to be absent, a permission for the attack was given and this arguably provided an added sense of legitimacy or legality in the minds of the perpetrators – at "best" viewed as an *authorization* to commit massacre. Furthermore, all these factors may

have created a feeling among the fighters of *not being personally responsible* for their own actions. This point is in line with Vetlesen's (2005) model outlined in Chapter 3. The fact that the victims were Arabs-Muslims probably made such atrocious acts easier to commit given the ideological conditioning. It probably also made it easier to *justify* in retrospect. Since the Deir Yassin massacre turned out to have such a big impact on the Palestinian exodus, the dissident fighters did indeed justify their acts retrospectively for having a positive *instrumental effect* on the Zionist project. A Palmach soldier describes how the dissident fighters presented their misdeeds from Deir Yassin:

In talks with [Irgun] and [Stern] people, they told me it was right to do this. That is, I believe they do not justify the Dir (sic.)Yassin Massacre, but they believe Dir Yassin was instrumental in intensifying [the Palestinian] fear and having them run away.

(Zochrot, 2012c)

Even though the Deir Yassin massacre was presented to the world as an exceptional case caused by dissident extremism, several other massacres took place in these months of the war: some by the dissidents (see below); and some by the Haganah, e.g. in Nasir al-Deen, Burayr, and Abu Shusha (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 105-111). Haganah soldiers thus showed brutal behavior *prior to* Arab states intervention. This is a description of the massacre in Abu Shusha which occurred May 14:

[People were] shot, bayoneted, and axed after the fall of the town [...] and at least one woman [was] raped. 50 people were killed. [...] Women and the elderly [were] forced to abandon the village.

(Abdel Jawad, 2007: 111)

### *5.1.5 Killing Fleeing Palestinians*

Before turning to a discussion on the mainstream military apparatus, a few other massacres by the dissidents are worth mentioning. During the battle over Jaffa, some weeks after the Deir Yassin massacre, Irgun forces from Tel Aviv occupied the Manshieh neighborhood where they systematically massacred around 50 combatants and civilians (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 107). Irgun also had an operation targeting four villages on May 12. In two of these four attacks, massacres occurred. One of them was

in Sabbarin. In Sabbarin the Irgun fighters killed about 20 *fleeing* civilians at first, and then elderly, women and children were forced into a house, which was blown up (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 109). Such behavior was not exclusive for the dissident troopers. A Palmach soldier confirms similar acts committed by the Palmach forces:

[Question]: You know, Amnon, we once met a soldier who had fought in Beersheba and he told us they shot people who had fled from Beersheba, people ran away and soldiers shot them, shot civilians.

Amnon Neumann: Yes, yes, yes. They ran away to the east and the south and they were shot. [...] I did that too.

(Zochrot, 2010)

Since Zionist military attacks generally aimed at getting Palestinians to leave Palestine, the fact that the Irgun fighters chose to kill Palestinians who were fleeing indicates a particular interest in the killing itself. This is explained by Vetlesen's (2005: 113) model, viewing the burden of collective vulnerability as a zero-sum game. Since inflicting pain and suffering on the enemy group becomes a mean to relief one's own group of vulnerability, violence against any representative of the enemy group becomes intrinsically valuable. On the other hand, the perpetrators may have thought of the bigger picture when killing fleeing civilians. By viewing such atrocities as a mean of making many others to flee out of fear, they may have been motivated by political incentives rather than emotional 'burden-transfer' incentives. In this way the killing may have been experienced by the perpetrators as "strictly business" or "a tactical maneuver", thus *not* a goal in itself. They might have thought they were merely serving their nation and thus doing their duty. This is reflected in a testimony by a Palmach soldier:

[Y]ou march up to a village, you expel it, you gather round and have a bite to eat, and go on to the next village. [...] I sat on this hill with a Browning and underneath me below there went the caravan and whoever strayed sideways, tried to sneak into the bushes, got shot, and *it was boring*

(Zochrot, 2012b, italics mine)

This testimony shows how killing outside of battle also occurred without enthusiasm. They were rather marked by *normalization* which probably resulted from the *routine* of such acts. Vetlesen's (2005) model is less helpful in such instances of collective evil-doing. Such acts does not seem to generate any "positive" emotions or "*kicks*", but

rather emotions of indifference and boredom, and is better explained with the soldiers being motivated by professionalism and a sense of duty. “Following orders”, in a broad sense of the term, becomes a more salient explanation in such cases.

All these possible factors discussed above are not necessarily mutually exclusive; they rather often reinforce each other. To measure the significance of each factor is difficult and may vary substantially between each individual fighter. Notwithstanding these different interpretations, they all represent versions of what can be labeled acts of collective evildoing. Even if killing fleeing Palestinians was solely caused by tactical considerations, the acts themselves were to “intentionally inflict pain and suffering” (evildoing) as well as targeting Palestinians *as such* in the interest of the Jewish people (*collective evildoing*).

#### 5.1.6 A New Hypothesis

This discussion has shown that the Deir Yassin massacre was not fully spontaneous even though it did not follow a specific plan. Furthermore, as far as orders were concerned, the directive coming from the Irgun command<sup>11</sup> in Tel-Aviv prior to the attack was, allegedly, to “avoid inflicting unnecessary casualties” (Hogan, 2001: 313-315). Thus, the Deir Yassin massacre seems to be a case where the explanation is partly found in important factors *prior* to the event (ideology and experience more than orders) as well as crucial factors occurring *during* the event itself which caused a heightened sense of vulnerability, feelings of revenge, and an increased desire to hurt representatives of the enemy-group (viewing violence more as inherently desirable than as a by-product of duty). The hypothesis derived from this is that the massacres in 1948 were *caused by feelings of vulnerability and revenge by the perpetrators, produced by ideology and experience*. A contributing cause is a *sense of authorization*.

An objection to emphasizing ideology and malevolence when discussing Jewish soldiers’ behavior *in general* is that the fighters discussed above were the extremists; those participating in terrorism and following a revisionist version of Zionism. These fighters would thus not fit the description of “ordinary men” in Christopher

---

<sup>11</sup> *Irgun* was headed by Menachem Begin. He was later to be prime minister of Israel.

Browning's sense of the term (Vetlesen, 2005: 31). They may not have received an order for expulsion but they were *exceptional* in their attitudes, and in this way cannot be equated with the more mainstream Jewish soldiers. The Deir Yassin massacre also happened when the fate of the Zionist dream was very unclear; in a vulnerable time without knowing the consequences of a potential Arab states intervention. This is true and invites first of all a closer look on the mainstream military forces, the Haganah/IDF, as well as on operations which took place when the level of insecurity was significantly lower. For instance, Operation Yoav and Hiram – which together caused the flight of about 200,000-230,000 Arabs (Morris, 2004a: 492) – took place in October 1948 when the Arab forces were practically beaten (Masalha, 2012: 83), and when the Israeli forces were much stronger and radically different from prior months (Morris, 2004a: 465). The following discussion will be about three expulsion operations with the focus on the worst massacre within each operation. By focusing on different operations, the particular impact of different regions, commanders, brigades, and time periods are to some extent controlled for.

## 5.2 Massacres during Expulsion Operations

The massacres discussed below occurred in the context of the strategic military plan, Plan D, which is a *structural* factor affecting decisions and behavior. Plan D arguably provides a sense of *authorization* to commit atrocities as part of the military operations which included expulsion of Palestinians. It appears that Plan D was presented somewhat differently to the politicians and the military leaders and thus opened up for viewing massacres as legitimate.

Unlike the general draft that was sent to the political leaders, the list of villages the military commanders received did not detail how the action of destruction or expulsion should be carried out. There was no specification here for how villages could save themselves, for instance by surrendering unconditionally as promised in the general document

(Pappé, 2006: 83)

It also appears that the *practice* of Plan D saw security concerns more in terms of demography than actual hostility:

In practice, the Plan D provision to leave intact non-resisting villages was superceded by the decision to destroy villages in strategic areas or along crucial routes regardless of whether or not there were resisting

(Morris, 2004a: 236)

However, it is difficult to measure to what extent they interpreted the threat as a *demographic* threat and not as a *military* threat, especially given the ideological framework which makes (ethnic) identity an existential issue; connecting the question of demography with the question of survival (see below). The first case of a massacre occurring within an “expulsion order”-context discussed below is the massacre in Lydda as part of Operation Dani. At this point in the war, the dissident fighters were incorporated into the mainstream organization which together formed the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). This means that the extremist ideology associated with the dissidents is not fully controlled for. Of the 8000 soldier participating in Operation Dani were 700 of them members of Irgun. It was also “a high proportion of World War II Jewish veterans volunteering from the United States, Britain, France, and South Africa” participating in this operation (Khalidi, 1998: 81). Notwithstanding this mixture, the massacre occurred in the context of an expulsion order and from this perspective it represents a typical case.

### *5.2.1 Operation Dani and the Massacre in Lydda*

The massacre in Lydda<sup>12</sup> occurred July 11-13, 1948. It was part of Operation Dani which was headed by Yigal Allon, with Yitzhak Rabin as his second in command. The main aim for this operation was to clear the two Palestinian towns Lydda and Ramle. They were located within the designated Arab state. Lydda was the first city to be bombed from the air. The attacking Jewish soldiers met a few hours of resistance before the Palestinian residents surrendered. Many took shelter inside a Mosque where they were subsequently massacred by the Jewish soldiers. According to Palestinian sources, as much as 426 people were killed in Lydda and 176 of these bodies were found in the Mosque (Pappé, 2006: 166-167). Israeli sources have confirmed the high number of casualties in the Mosque, where only “one injured man survived to tell the story” (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 100). The day after the massacre, about 50,000

---

<sup>12</sup> Lydda is also called Lydd or al-Lydd. This massacre is often referred to as the massacre in Lod since Lydda is part of Lod (Pappé, 2006: 166). Ramle is also called Ramla.

Palestinians were forced to march towards the West Bank, without food and water, in one of the hottest areas of Palestine, in one of the warmest months of the year. Many died on the way (Pappé, 2006: 167-169).

The expulsion of the Arab populations of Lydda and Ramle [...] accounted for a full one-tenth of the Arab exodus from Palestine; it was the largest operation of its kind in [the war] ... [T]he order for it came directly from [Ben-Gurion] ... [In many respects the events] fit and illustrate the pattern and norms of Israeli-Arab relations during the 1948 war, [e.g. the] brutality of the war

(Morris, 1986: 82)

The motivation behind these acts is open for debate, but there is no doubt that the outcome was intentional. And the pain and suffering inflicted upon the Palestinians during this operation was both serious and foreseeable, hence ‘evildoing’ according to Vetlesen’s (2005: 2) definition.

So the overall framework of the operation was clear; the massacre occurred in an “expulsion order”- context in line with the ideological structure of Zionist intentions. In addition to this, circumstantial factors during the battle affected the Jewish soldiers and their intentions. At 11.30, July 12, two Arab Legion armored cars entered Lydda by accident. This turned to a thirty minutes firefight where two Jewish soldiers were killed and twelve wounded (Morris, 1986: 88). This caused Lydda’s townspeople to join what they thought was a proper Arab Legion counterattack. So they started sniping against the Jewish soldiers. Due to this the Jewish soldiers who had occupied Lydda, and were under the impression that the townspeople had surrendered, “felt threatened, vulnerable and angry”. The Jewish soldiers received orders “to shoot at ‘any clear target’ [or] at anyone ‘seen on the streets’” (Morris, 1986: 88). Then the massacre described above began, and circumstantial factors seemed to be significant. The Palestinian scholar, Walid Khalidi, sums it up:

[The] sudden appearance [of the Arab Legion cars] panicked the Israeli troops [...] They reacted] with utmost brutality, leaving in a matter of hours in the streets about 250 civilian dead in an orgy of indiscriminate killing [...] Then they] began the systematic expulsion of the residents

(Khalidi, 1998: 82)



Instead of putting *all* explanation of the massacre on *circumstance* (indicated above), and instead of putting *all* explanation on *structure*, such as Zionism and the initial expulsion order (emphasized by Abdel Jawad, 2007: 99), or putting *all* explanation on *character*, such as the brigade commander of the IDF, Mula Cohen, explained it; that the Jewish soldiers “sought an outlet [for] vengeful urges” (Morris, 1986: 89), Vetlesen’s (2005) model shows how these three explanatory factors fit together. The evidence above indicates that the Jewish soldiers had both an *internal* motivation for evildoing, i.e. vulnerability, and *external* authorization and “justification” to do evil without feeling responsible for it, i.e. following orders and acting in “self-defense”. These micro-level factors come on top of a macro-level framework; the war, the Zionist project, and an expulsion order from the top.

A strong desire to see the Arabs of the two towns flee already existed [among the Jewish leadership, and the shooting offered] the justification and opportunity [to achieve that goal]

(Morris, 1986: 89)

Thus what caused the Jewish soldiers to commit a massacre in Lydda was arguably a combination of structure, circumstance, and character, which points to the causal mechanisms in Vetlesen’s model as suggestive.

In the aftermath of the massacre, the Jewish soldiers organized the surviving Palestinians to dig graves and bury the dead Palestinians. The Palestinian diggers were then shot to death (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 100). What role did order play in this case? A Palmach soldier from 1948 describes in an interview the event he witnessed after the massacre in the Mosque. He claims it was voluntary for the Jewish soldiers to participate in this organized atrocity.

[Interviewer]: You took part in [killing the Palestinians who had dug the graves]?

[Jewish soldier]: No, they wanted me to participate and I didn't go, it was voluntary.

[Interviewer]: You know there was one who survived.

[Jewish soldier]: [...] How should I know? I'm just a regular serviceman, what do I know?

(Zochrot, 2012a)

The last comment of the Palmach soldier, about being “just a regular serviceman”, could be interpreted as him viewing himself merely as a tool for the collective – being in a so-called ‘agentic state’ – without personal responsibility. On the other hand, in risk of lending too much meaning to every little word stated, this statement could be seen as merely a way of saying that he is not informed about the historical facts. The interview continues and the Palmach soldier mentions at least two points which are relevant for this thesis.

[Interviewer]: For you this was something?

[Eshet]: Indeed it was. I was only 16 months in Israel. You have to understand – I come from a different world. I did hear about the Warsaw Ghetto and about the partisans, but I never saw it with my own eyes [...]

[Interviewer]: Why is [Lydda] such a traumatic event for you?

[Eshet]: Two things. First, it was the first time we fought in daytime. I said, at night, whether you shot or didn't, whether you killed or didn't, you're not really sure. In [Lydda], you saw what you were doing. For the first time.

(Zochrot, 2012a)

First, he talks about the experience of the Jews in Europe and in Palestine prior to 1948 as this was a decisive factor guiding the attitudes and behavior of the other Jewish soldiers, and that this was not the case for him. This statement indicates that he had less reason to accept or commit atrocities than his fellow Jewish soldiers due to *their* vulnerable history. Thus an explanation points to *internal* motivation combined with a *collective* experience rather than obedience to authority or merely 1948 circumstances.

Second, he claims that Lydda was a traumatic experience because they fought in daytime. This point can be connected to Bauman's emphasis on *distance* as a precondition, or at least a significant factor, for enabling collective evildoing (Vetlesen, 2005: 28) ‘Daylight’ would certainly fall into that category; making it more difficult for the perpetrators to distance themselves from their victims. However, Vetlesen's model explains how proximity between perpetrator and victim is *not* necessarily a barrier for atrocities; in fact, cases of ethnic cleansing are characterized by proximity between perpetrator and victim. As a consequence, the perpetrator seeks to distance themselves from their victims in terms of agency, that is, responsibility and guilt for his actions (Vetlesen, 2005: 262-263). Even though the Lydda massacre may have

caused more traumatic memory for the perpetrators than other previous massacres due to daylight, the massacre still occurred and appears to be the bloodiest massacre of the *1948 War*, thus pointing to the *opposite* inference than Bauman's thesis. What about later in the 1948 War? In October – when the issue of militarily “fighting for survival” decreased and instances of massacres increased – what caused Jewish soldiers to commit the massacre in Dawayima during Operation Yoav?

### *5.2.2 Operation Yoav and the Massacre in Dawayima*

The massacre in Dawayima occurred on October 29. This was part of Operation Yoav led by Yigal Allon. Benny Morris has this to say about Yigal Allon:

In all his previous campaigns Yigal Allon had left no Arab community in his wake [...] Nothing was said in the operational order for Operation Yoav about the prospective fate of the communities to be overrun – but Allon, the OC, no doubt let his officers know what he wanted and most probably they knew (*and agreed with*) what he wanted (sic.) without explicit instruction

(Morris, 2004a: 465, italics mine)

Battalion No. 89 of the eighth brigade was the best armed unit of the IDF Army. They conquered Dawayima almost without resistance. The massacre happened in several stages. The first incident occurred in a Mosque. Some Jewish soldiers marched into the Mosque and shot many villagers. Many were there because of Friday prayer and as a place to seek refuge (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 90). Mosques were a common place to seek refuge during *1948 War*. The second stage of the massacre was indiscriminate killing in the streets and in village houses. This included four girls who were also raped by the Jewish soldiers (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 91). The third incident took place in front of a cave where several families, mostly women and children, had tried to hide. They were discovered by the Jewish soldiers, forced out, and shot. “Entire families were executed. Two injured persons escaped” (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 91).

The refugees from Dawayima who reached Hebron informed the UN observers that “the Jews had repeated the Deir Yassin massacre in Dawayima” (Morris, 2004a: 469). Similar to the Deir Yassin massacre, some of the reported estimates about the scope of the Dawayima massacre were far too high. But unlike the Deir Yassin massacre, the nature and scope of the Dawayima massacre was tried held secret to the public. The

Arab authorities had learned from the Deir Yassin experience that information about Zionist massacres caused Palestinian fear and flight rather than a will to fight. This is reflected in a UN report from June 1949:

The reason why so little is known about [the Dawayima] massacre which, in many respects, was more brutal than the Deir Yassin massacre, is because the Arab Legion (the army in control of that area) feared that if the news was allowed to spread, it would have the same effect on the moral of the peasantry that Deir Yassin had, namely to cause another flow of Arab refugees

(Pappé, 2006: 196)

The Egyptian garrison in Bethlehem reported 500 massacred in Dawayima. The American consul-general in Jerusalem reported 500-1,000 executed. A more likely estimate was made by a Jewish soldier who was an eye-witness. He claimed at the time that the IDF had “killed about 80 to 100 Arabs”, including women and children. The atrocities were *excessive* and seems to have been guided by group-identity qualifications rather than a military considerations since the Jewish soldiers “killed [children] by breaking their heads with sticks” (Morris, 2004: 496-470). The brutalities described about the Dawayima massacre are similar to Palestinian testimonies about other massacres, e.g. in Tantura, Safsaf and Sa’sa (Pappé, 2006: 197). The Jewish soldier eye-witness continues his account of the massacre:

One commander ordered a sapper to put two old women in a certain house...and blow it up...The sapper refused...The commander then ordered his men to put in the old women and the evil deed was done (sic.). One soldier boasted that he had raped a woman and then shot her. One woman [...] was employed to clean the courtyard where the soldiers ate. She worked a day or two. In the end they shot her and her baby

(Morris, 2004a: 470)

This testimony is interesting with regard to the research question of this thesis for at least three reasons. First, according to this account, the Jewish soldier – the ‘sapper’ – *refused* to obey orders. From this statement it is unknown what happened to the soldier who refused, and thus unclear the degree of pressure which was put on the Jewish soldiers to obey. However, the fact that some soldiers obeyed the *same order*, in the *same situation*, as the ‘sapper’ who refused shows that individual differences count. The reason why one soldier refuses and another obeys is difficult to explain, even

when circumstantial factors are controlled for as they arguably are in this case. The explanatory variable that stands out for explaining the difference between obedience and disobedience in such a case is *character*. However, to what extent the character of the perpetrator is marked by “obedience to authority” or “a desire to inflict pain” is unknown from this statement. This example of disobedience also shows how efforts to provide *one general* answer to the causes of atrocious behavior in 1948 are more likely to be suggestive than conclusive, thus not insisting upon finding *one* explanation for every massacre or every perpetrator.

Second, the account of the Jewish soldier above also describes how a rape was bragged about. It remains unknown how the other soldiers responded to that remark, but it certainly indicates that such acts was not only acceptable among these Jewish soldiers but something worth bragging about – something worth making “*public*” to fellow soldiers. The issue of rape during 1948 “has remained under-reported and under-investigated” (Masalha, 2012: 82) Benny Morris documents 12 cases of rape, but makes the inference that they “are just the tip of the iceberg” (Shavit, 2004). This is how he describes instances of rape:

Usually more than one soldier was involved. Usually there were one or two Palestinian girls. In a large portion of the cases the [rape] ended with murder  
(Morris in Shavit, 2004)

This indicates that such acts can be understood as acts of collective evildoing; excessive abuse, public humiliation, and murder – three of the observable implications of Vetlesen’s model (see Chapter 3). Acts of rape are not massacres which is the topic of this thesis. However, such observations support the inference that the Jewish soldiers were seeking to ‘transfer’ collective vulnerability. Thus massacres become the end of a spectrum of alternatives for such an aim.

Finally, the account of the Jewish soldier above describes how a woman and her baby were killed after working for the soldiers for several days. Notwithstanding that the circumstance in which they were murdered are within the general context of war, it occurred far away from a battle situation. It thus lends more support to the other two explanatory variables; ideology and collective vulnerability rather than circumstance.

In security terms, the woman and her child, whom I assume were Palestinians, were plausibly seen as a *demographic* threat. They thus represented a legitimate target; killed for being Palestinians *as such*. And seen through Vetlesen's model (2005), they also represented a suitable target for "transferring" vulnerability felt by the perpetrators given their collectivized identity. The way circumstantial factors affected the outcome in this case is arguably better understood as a heightened sense of *power*, or better yet *total* power, over the victims, than a heightened sense of *insecurity* which is more characteristic of a battle. This element of 'inducing pain on others to feel powerful' is central in Vetlesen's model (2005) and can help to explain why the massacres tend to happen *after* a battle rather than *during* it (as shown in the cases above). This was usually the case during Operation Hiram as well.

### 5.2.3 Operation Hiram

The Israeli historian, Benny Morris, describes Operation Hiram like this:

About half of the acts of massacre [during the 1948 War] were part of Operation Hiram. [This included an] unusually high concentration of executions of people against a wall or next to a well in an orderly fashion.[...]Apparently, various officers who took part in the operation understood that the expulsion order they received permitted them to do these deeds in order to encourage [the Palestinians to flee]. [N]o one was punished for these acts of murder [and Ben-Gurion] covered up for the officers who did the massacres.

(Morris in Shavit, 2004)

Operation Hiram led to a series of expulsions and massacres. The massacres took place either immediately after taking control over a village or, as in most cases, in the following days after the conquest (Morris, 1999a: 73-74). The strong similarities between the massacres indicate that the officers who led the operations in the field were under the same impression that such acts were authorized by the central command (General Carmel). They may even have received operational guidelines to act in such a way. The absence of any punishment of the perpetrators, neither of soldiers nor officers, strengthens such an interpretation (Morris, 1999a: 73-74). Almost all of the massacres initiated through Operation Hiram were characterized by a similar pattern:

[A] unit would enter a village, round up [the men] in the village square, select four or ten or fifty of the army-age males [sometimes according to prepared lists], line them up against a wall, and shoot them

(Morris, 1999a: 74)

The fact that these sorts of killings happened according to prepared lists, mainly from prior intelligence work – the Village Files (see Pappé, 2006: 17-22) – opens up for the inference that what took place in 1948 included *politicide*. The term “politicide” refers to the “killing where the intended target is the entire leadership and potential leadership class” (Mann, 2005: 16). The criteria for being included in these lists

were involvement in the Palestinian national movement, having close ties to the leader of the movement, [or] having participated in actions against the British and the Zionists. [This] could include whole villages

(Pappé, 2006: 22)

The fact that it could include whole villages obscures the distinction between individuals and groups. This in turn enables a shift of policy from politicide to ethnic cleansing – targeting Palestinians as such, but prioritizing strategic places. Such a policy would make sense militarily and politically from a Zionist perspective, where the security concern for Palestinians was largely seen as a demographic problem (Morris, 2004: 60; Pappé, 2006: 26).

Another aspect of Operation Hiram is the selective nature of the expulsions. Most villagers were expelled, but many were allowed to stay. Some villages were exempted from destruction, and others were treated with brutality, e.g. Sa’sa and Safsaf. These decisions were primarily taken by local commanders. The explanations regarding these differences are not obvious (Pappé, 2006: 181). One inference is that the Jewish soldiers were acting intuitively or by ‘instinct’ when treating different groups differently (Morris, 2004a: 474). Another inference is that such different treatment of the indigenous groups of Palestine was made explicit by Jewish leaders, thus the soldiers were only followed the guidelines (Parsons, 2001). The latter inference is based on the observation that Muslim villagers who were *not* resisting the Jewish forces were often expelled, while those Druze villagers who *were* resisting were *not expelled* (Parsons 2000: 102-121). While the explanations differ, they both point to

ethnic and religious considerations about who was targeted and expelled. This supports the idea that group-identity was closely linked to the issue of security, or at least that group-identity mattered somehow.

The massacres during Operation Hiram “appear largely to have been premeditated rather than spontaneous outbreaks of vengeful impulses by undisciplined troops” (Morris, 2004a: 491). This confirms the idea that orders played a significant role in causing the Jewish soldiers to commit massacres. This impression is reinforced by the fact that strict prohibitions against looting were repeatedly ordered, but no such restrictions were given regarding “the killing of civilians and POWs” (Morris, 2004a: 474). Notwithstanding premeditation, it appears that the “obedience to authority”-explanation is unsatisfactory even in this case.

On 31 October Northern Front instructed all units ‘to assist’ the inhabitants ‘to leave’. But that order came [...] after [the units] had completed their initial sweeps and conquests [...] It was one thing to order units [...] to expel inhabitants in the midst of battle and conquest; it was quite another to instruct them [...] to go back and expel communities they had already overrun and left in place

(Morris, 2004a: 474)

Taken from this, it seems that since the circumstance of battle was gone, the obedience by these Jewish soldiers of following an order for expulsion was dramatically decreased. This observation points to the inference that orders in themselves were not sufficient, that the “obedience to authority”- explanation is weak by itself, and that the soldiers needed at least some *situational* context which made it convincing for them that their acts was a response to a threat. Thus a sense of a ‘self-defense’-context was important for them to justify what they did. On the other hand, since the order referred to above was more euphemistic and thus ambiguous than previous orders, a clear conclusion of this issue is difficult. This makes it difficult to make an inference whether situation and own initiatives were more decisive than orders for causing the massacres during Operation Hiram. When there is variation on more than one potential explanatory variable, the function of a ‘negative case’ is less helpful (Mahoney and Goertz, 2004: 654).



As far as evidence relating to observable implications of Vetlesen's (2005) model is concerned, that is, excessive violence as indication of a 'transfer' of collective vulnerability, quite a few cases indicate such excess. In Sa'sa, for example, indiscriminate killings occurred: "Many villagers, including cripples, [were] massacred after the surrender of the village" (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 121). In Safsaf, after air- and artillery strikes which killed many civilians, Jewish soldiers conquered the village where 70 villagers were executed. They were shot, bayoneted or drowned. At least four rapes were perpetrated. The *Mukhtar* (the Palestinian leader) of the village reported "widespread rape" (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 119). The village of Saliha experienced indiscriminate killings during Operation Hiram; "60-94 people [were] killed after being forced into a house which [was] blown up (Abdel Jawad, 2007: 121). The Saliha massacre was probably the bloodiest of the numerous massacres which occurred during Operation Hiram, and together with the massacres in Lydda, Dawayima and Deir Yassin, it was among the largest during the *1948 War*<sup>13</sup>.

### **5.3 General Causes for Committing Massacres**

This section of the discussion will move from case-studies on the micro-level and over to discussing general causes on the macro-level. This includes tracing the causal chain back in time: identifying the norms which were salient in the settler community in Palestine in the decades prior to 1948; discussion how the development of such ideas may be connected to the Jewish experience in Europe; and suggesting how European anti-Semitism in general, and the Holocaust in particular, might have caused a sense of collective vulnerability for the settlers which in turn affected their character, i.e. how they tend to think and feel, and relate to others. The question of 'transferring' collective vulnerability is central in this discussion.

#### *5.3.1 Orders and Ideology*

A central question in this thesis is to what extent atrocious behavior such as committing massacres could best be explained by "soldiers following orders" or by "soldiers acting on own initiative". They seem like two explanations opposing one

---

<sup>13</sup> It was possibly a large massacre in Tantura as well, but the details about the scope of this massacre remain under debate (see Morris, 2004b; Pappé, 2001).

another; the former caused by loyalty to authority; the latter caused by ideological conviction. I believe these two explanatory factors are often presented with a too sharp distinction between them. By explaining atrocities by “orders” it invites the interpretation that the soldier receiving the order is doing something he or she would rather not do, or at “best” would be indifferent to do. Vetlesen’s (2005) model explains how these two factors go together, that in fact the soldiers may have a strong interest in committing atrocities against the specific Other, and are happy to get an order about such acts. The order enables the soldier to feel that his personal responsibility for his atrocious acts is lifted away from him. Same effect can come from particular ideological conditioning which increases a sense of collectivity and righteousness, that is, a type of group-thinking which provides a certain moral universe that favors your own group and disfavors a particular other group. This in turn enables the perpetrator to do horrific acts without feeling guilty about them, at least in the short run. It provides a mixture of options for justifying one’s own acts, and both orders and ideology are ways to do so, and they reinforce each other.

To take orders first; to what extent did the Jewish soldiers follow orders given to them? Was there any disobedience when, for instance, massacres took place? A few cases mentioned above show that instances of disobedience to orders occurred. However, a statement by a Palmach soldier about the *general* level of obedience indicates that disobedience was uncommon:

[Question]: Were there cases of disobedience to orders? Did anyone get up and leave rather than go all the way through with it?

[Palmach soldier]: Where? With us? No. Never. Everyone went all the way through with it and to the bitter end

(Zochrot, 2010)

A high level of obedience leaves the impression that killing Palestinians was not difficult for the Jewish soldiers – that the orders they received felt appropriate if not welcomed. The Palmach soldier continues by stating this explicitly:

It wasn't difficult. Who was it difficult for? For the squad commander who gave the order, for the soldier who pulled the trigger? It wasn't difficult. It was completely natural—we had to do it. If not, they would slaughter us. Don't think that if it were the other way around it would have been better. It would have been much worse. There is no doubt about it

(Zochrot, 2010)

In this testimony a justification is presented for what appears to be a discussion about killing or expelling Palestinians. This justification effectively blames the victims. The logic goes: “It is the evil character of the victims who forces us to act this way. Our evildoing is self-defense”. This is similar to what Vetlesen (2005: 175) characterizes as ‘genocidal logic’, that “the perpetrator group does exactly what it castigates the target for having done (in some remote or recent past) or for being now about to do against one’s own group”. The ideological message of self-defense is thus presented either as retaliation or pre-emption. The idea of self-defense goes deeper when the ideology creates a strong link between identity and survival. This is explained in Vetlesen’s (2005: 167-170) model as *securitization*, a term adopted from the so-called Copenhagen School. It explains “how a particular object is presented as threatened and how extraordinary measures are justified to defend it (Vetlesen, 2005: 167)

So what about the ideological conditioning and the attitudes of the Jewish soldiers in 1948? What kind of ideas did they have about their identity? A discussion about the deeper values of the settler community is called for. Which norms were central in the settler culture? A thorough analysis of these questions is too much for this thesis, but the next section will present two norms which were dominant within the Yishuv in the decades prior to 1948. The point of this is to identify deeper attitudes and concerns of the Jewish soldiers who committed massacres in 1948; attitudes and concerns which potentially and probably affected their feelings and desires *unconsciously*.

### 5.3.2 The Halutzim-Generation

The second wave of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, from about 1905, called themselves *halutz* (i.e. pioneer). Each individual *halutz* is part of the *halutzim* which means “vanguard”. *Halutz* expresses “[a norm for *collective* action where individual features totally disappear]” (Butenschøn, 2006: 115). This is interesting because it

indicates that the individual settler's identity was closely linked to the group's identity – the *collective*. Another norm was also established by this so-called 'Halutzim-generation'. This term was *oleh*, which expresses a norm for an individual purification process. This norm was linked to the idea of liberating oneself, and to find one's true identity. The terms *halutz* and *oleh* has a long history within the Jewish tradition. This is an example of how the Zionist movement in Palestine used religious terms to create strong norms, and at the same time made the content of these norms secular with nationalistic and revolutionary features (Butenschøn, 2006: 115).

The settler community in the decades prior to 1948 was thus characterized by this culture of *halutzimism*. The ideas promoted here goes further than the general Zionist idea of establishing a Home for the Jewish People. It aims to create a particular *identity* for the Yishuv – an identity that extols virtues of collectivism and purity<sup>14</sup>. The message about the true *halutz* is clear:

[He wants the collective, for without it he could not be an individual [...]  
Individualism and collectivism goes together in a natural organic unity [...]  
Therefore it is proven that the "contradiction" which allegedly exists  
between individualism and unity is a European lie]

(Butenschøn, 2006: 116, translated from Norwegian)

The Zionist movement, which was aimed at creating a *national* identity, pointed out what it saw as real and true Jewish and that Zionism was the *only* possible way to save the essence of this identity. The religious connections to the land of Palestine had to be turned into political action. Ideology became vital in this respect. The Jewish pioneers, the Halutzim-generation, needed ideology to justify their political goal as well as justify individual actions, [e.g. atrocities] (Butenschøn, 2006: 116-117). A central objective of the Zionist ideology was "the Territory", i.e. Palestine. It was conceptualized as an existential need and as crucial to the collective identity (Kellerman, 1993: 36).

It appears that to make Palestine into a Jewish state became an object of desire for the Yishuv. This objective represented the only solution to create and preserve the essence

---

<sup>14</sup> The desire for 'purity' is a common feature in the history of mass violence, such as ethnic, national or religious purity (Hagtvet, 2008: 22).

of their collective – their identity – which had become an existential issue. The link between identity and survival was made by ideology. Vetlesen’s model explains:

[T]he desired object is regarded as a substitute for the primordially lost object [read: Palestine]. [Together, group members] project what they lack – what they are not, but desire to be – onto objects, creating illusive fantasies of (re)gaining them. [...] To construct and present an object as threatened is the paramount example of how this is done. [...] Whatever aggression is unleashed against [those said to pose a threat to it] will be considered legitimate, as dictated by self-defence

(Vetlesen, 2005: 169)

It now becomes more understandable that the outcome of the *1948 War* was ethnic cleansing since the settler community had equated the question of survival to the issue of collective identity. Vetlesen’s (2005: 159) model suggests that “‘ethnic cleansing’ is identity politics against a sociohistorical background where *identity* [...] has become a deeply existential issue”. It also becomes more plausible that those soldiers who committed massacres in 1948 also were influenced by such a perspective; connecting collective identity to survival, hence fighting for a *pure* Jewish state in “self-defence”.

Backtracking even further, the desire for a creating a new collective identity, as described above, can be seen in relation to the experience the Jews had in Europe before coming to Palestine. Not only had the Jewish identity been defined negatively in Europe and thus needed to be redefined. But also, the settlers’ identity based on their particular European *nationality*, e.g. German or Russian, arguably lost its significance when leaving Europe. The lack of a satisfying collective identity may have led to *individualization* and in turn to a desire for a new collective identity (see below). Thus, the European experience may have created a strong desire for a *new* collective identity (as described above). Inspired by Hannah Arendt’s views about the triumph of totalitarian fascist ideas, Vetlesen (2005: 164) describes the dialectic between individualization and collectivism. Notwithstanding the differences between totalitarian fascism and Zionism<sup>15</sup>, the attractiveness of Zionism for Jewish refugees from Europe may still be understood in a similar way.

---

<sup>15</sup> On the extreme side of Zionism the distance to fascism was not that great. The main features of Revisionist Zionism were in line with what constitutes a fascist ideology, e.g. viewing Jews as a superior “race”. Jabotinsky, who was the political and ideological leader on the right, was inspired by Mussolini. He saw European culture

[I]solated and alienated individuals long for a sense of belonging to some sort of organic community in which they will be relieved of the burden of having to create all meaning, identity, and moral values out of themselves. [...] Individuals liberated from the shackles of tradition arrive at a point where they stop cherishing their newly attained freedom and start fearing it instead [...] Through ideology] the individuals are offered a unitary direction in which they may collectively march, being many, yet feeling as one  
(Vetlesen, 2005: 164)

Given that the Jewish soldiers not only believed in the ideology themselves, but also believed that their atrocious acts were what their leaders wanted, a clearer synthesis between the two hypotheses of “orders and ideology” becomes even more salient. And there are good reasons to believe that the Jewish soldiers had this impression about their leaders. It was the leaders of the Halutzim-generation that led the Yishuv in the decades prior to the *1948 War*, and subsequently led the State of Israel from its birth (Beilin, 1992: 39). It was thus the norms outlined above which guided the leaders of the Yishuv in this period. From this it is expected that such ideas were present in the message articulated by Jewish leaders. Moving from a focus on norms and virtues, and over to the realm of history and experience, what was communicated by the leaders of the Jewish soldiers during the 1948 War?

### 5.3.3 *The Holocaust-Analogy*

What makes the Israeli-Palestinian problem exceptional is, above all, that no other population actively involved in a colonial-settler project was fleeing a form of persecution as long-standing and brutal as European anti-Semitism, or was made up of survivors of such a stupefying crime against humanity.  
(Achcar, 2010: 31)

The Holocaust had ended only three years before the 1948 Palestine War, so the memory of the horrific experience in Europe was very much present within the Yishuv. An analogy between the situation in Palestine in 1948 and the Holocaust was often made by the Zionist leadership. Ben-Gurion, which was the prominent and powerful leader of the Zionist movement at the time, held fiery speeches to the Yishuv. He told them that “[t]his is a war aimed at destroying and eliminating the Jewish community”.

---

as superior and Zionism as an expansion of European civilization (Avineri in Butenschøn, 2006: 179-185). Ben-Gurion’s views and conclusions about the conflict between the Palestinian Arabs and the Zionist project “were virtually identical to Jabotinsky’s” ideas which were articulated in the article ‘On the Iron Wall’ in 1923 (Shlaim, 2001: 19).

He claimed that the Jewish casualties<sup>16</sup> were “victims of a second Holocaust” (Pappé, 2006: 72). This way of using the Jewish experience in Europe can be interpreted as a way of using the collective sense of vulnerability as a mobilizing force. Such a clear comparison between Palestinians and Nazis arguably affected the Jewish soldiers to look at Palestinians not only as legitimate targets, but *unconsciously* to see the situation as a second chance to get it right; *to collectively be on the favorable side of the perpetrator/victim divide*. To present the Palestinians as equivalent to Nazis enables the Jewish soldiers to take “revenge” over past cruelty done to them. I am not arguing that Jewish soldiers actually believed that Palestinians were responsible for the Holocaust<sup>17</sup>. The point here is the symbolic role-play effect. The 1948-situation was presented as the same as the Holocaust, except in terms of power. Similar situation, but ‘*the tables have turned*’, i.e. the Jews have the superior power. Such logic would be predominantly *unconscious* to the Jewish soldiers who might have thought in this way. This is *one* reason why it is so difficult to measure. Such logic is not expected to be articulated in statements where Jewish soldiers explain their own behavior. Measurement problems make my argument about such a mechanism more suggestive than conclusive. However, such a mechanism is the expected one seen through Vetlesen’s model, particularly since *collective trauma* – based on real or imagined historical events – plays a significant role in establishing collective vulnerability and victim identity (Vetlesen, 2005: 179).

This quote by an Israeli Jew about his participation in the 1948 War supports the inference that such a mechanism existed: “Six million Jews were destroyed and I wanted to take revenge”. Morris (1995: 59) presents this quote and explains that such sentences were omitted from the official Israeli record, which is *another* reason why it is difficult to measure the mechanism described above. Morris concludes:

---

<sup>16</sup> By the end of January, the Jewish death toll was 400 casualties. This was a significant amount and certainly indicated a threat, at least to the most isolated Jewish settlements. However, the context of Zionist aggression and the fact that 1500 Palestinians had by then been killed by the Jewish soldiers was omitted from Ben-Gurion’s speeches to the Yishuv (Pappé, 2006: 72)

<sup>17</sup> Although: Collaboration between Hajj Amin al-Husseini and Hitler arguably increased the impression of such connection (Karch, 2002).

By omitting these sentences, the official record in effect deleted the linkages made by some of the participants between Jewish behavior toward the Arabs and the Nazis' behavior toward European Jewry

(Morris, 1995: 59)

Such logic could have had significant impact on some Jewish soldiers and no impact on others. To the extent that such a mechanism caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres, the explanatory variable of "Jewish [Collective] Vulnerability" is emphasized as significant, and the "obedience to authority"-explanation becomes less helpful.

The mechanisms discussed above makes the Palestinians appear as a so-called 'surrogate victim'. This concept is taken from Girard's theory, which is part of Vetlesen's (2005: 182) model. A surrogate victim is a suitable 'object' (i.e. the enemy group) for channeling internal collective anxieties within the perpetrator group, thus to symbolically externalize inner collective 'badness' in order to get relief of it, and in turn physically destroy it (Vetlesen, 2005: 184). Girard's main point is that the internal anxiety stems from fear the members of the perpetrator group have of *each other*. But in case of the Jews in Palestine it is more likely that it would stem from their experience in Europe, which in turn was heightened by the real and imagined threats in Palestine. A desire to get relief from collective anxiety and feelings of revenge produces a desire for a 'surrogate victim' (Vetlsen, 2005: 182). My argument is that this mechanism is not dependent of the *source* of these feelings. The decisive factor is the feelings, not how they developed. A similar argument can be made about the Zionist perception of the history of Palestine; seeing the 1948 War as a quest to *re-establish* a Jewish state, where the Arab Muslims are the foreigners and occupiers of Palestine, going back two-thousand years (Butenschøn, 2006: 98). To the extent that this narrative was 'felt' by the Jewish soldiers as part of their collective 'experience', then the loss of the old Jewish state can be interpreted as a 'chosen trauma' which the 1948-Palestinians were held responsible for (see Vetlesen, 2005: 179).

The collective history of the Jews in Europe, together with the Holocaust-analogy which connected Palestinians with Nazis, plausibly provided "a collective basis for the desire to [...] reverse the roles of aggressor and victim" (Vetlesen, 2005: 181). The



‘Holocaust-analogy’ was also articulated by special political officers who spoke directly to the Jewish soldiers. Often the day before a military operation, these officers would “actively incite the troops by demonizing the Palestinians and invoking the Holocaust as a point of reference” (Pappé, 2007: 83). The Nazi/Palestinian-connection is also reflected in one of the Jewish conditions for a truce in Haifa. “All Nazis and Europeans in Arab ranks to be surrendered”. In reality there was none (Khalidi, 2008: 52).

To the extent that the Palestinians represented a ‘surrogate victim’<sup>18</sup>, a likely result of the collective violence against the Palestinians was further integration of the Jewish community where “the identity of the members [was] confirmed as unequivocally linked with the group” (Vetlesen, 2005: 182). In this way, the engagement in collective violence became intrinsically valuable for the Yishuv. Thus, the *desire* for collective integration might have played a role in causing the Jewish soldiers to commit the massacres. If this was a contributing factor, the massacres can also be understood as a *by-product* of nation-building – a *functionalist* explanation. What about political goals? What was communicated by the Zionist leadership about the aims of the military operations?

#### 5.3.4 *The Massage of Ethnic Cleansing*

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are different interpretations of Plan D as an *expulsion* policy. But regardless of any centralized master-plan for expulsion, expulsion operations occurred (as discussed above), and a message of expulsion was signaled by the Zionist leadership. Benny Morris explains that from April 1948, when Plan D was put into practice, Ben-Gurion was signaling “a message of transfer” and received full support of this idea (Shavit, 2004). “Transfer” in this context means the forceful removal of the Arab population out of (most of) Palestine. “Population transfer” is thus another way of saying “ethnic cleansing”. In fact, the word “cleansing” was frequently used by the Zionist leadership (Morris in Shavit, 2004). Military orders and operations reflected the same message: Orders to clean, destroy, harass, and

---

<sup>18</sup> If the Palestinians were seen as a ‘surrogate victim’ then the violence against them was expected to be *ritualized*, according to Girard’s theory (Vetlesen, 2005: 188). This factor may be contributing to the violence against Palestinians in the years after 1948 and up to the present moment in time.

remove; and operations with names such as Operation Broom, Operation Passover Cleaning, and Operation Scissors. Even whole villages were ordered to be “‘cleaned’, ‘cleansed’, ‘destroyed’ [or] ‘removed’” (Masalha, 2012: 59). But the message of “transfer” was expressed earlier than the launching of Plan D. Ben-Gurion stated already in 1937 that “it was better that the smallest possible number of Arabs remain within the area of the state”. In 1947, he told the Labour Party (Mapai): “Only a state with at least 80% Jews is a viable and stable state”. He also told the Executive of the Jewish Agency that since the Palestinians could become a fifth column inside the Jewish state, “they can either be mass arrested or expelled; it is better to expel them” (Pappé, 2006: 47-49; see also Morris, 2004a: 39-61).

Ben-Gurion’s message of “transfer” (i.e. ethnic cleansing) was primarily directed at those in leader positions in the Zionist movement. The leadership was careful about presenting this idea in public, in fear of losing support from the West (Morris, 2004a: 52). Nonetheless, the idea to forcefully expel the Palestinians was a logical step for those who already had accepted the exclusivist nature of Zionism; leaders and soldiers alike. This is reflected in a testimony by a Palmach soldier who explains how he saw the Zionist project and what caused him to support it:

[W]e didn’t come to collect taxes, we came to inherit the land from foreigners. That was the foundation of our thinking. *We drove them out because of the Zionist ideology.* Pure and simple. We came to inherit the land. Who do you inherit it from? If the land is empty, you don’t inherit it from anyone. The land wasn’t empty so we inherited it, and whoever inherits the land disinherits others (sic.).

(Zochrot, 2012, italics mine)

He continues by describing the impact of ideology, but finishes off by blaming orders:

At that time I didn’t see anything wrong with it. I was educated to it just like everybody else. And I followed through with it faithfully, and if I was told things I don’t want to mention [committing atrocities?]*—I did them without the least of a doubt. Without thinking twice. For fifty or sixty years I’ve been torturing myself about this. But what’s done is done. It was done by order.*

(Zochrot, 2012, italics mine)

At the end of this quote, the Palmach soldier explains the cause of what is obviously a talk about atrocities as a result of following orders. The clear emphasis on both

*ideology* and *orders* as the causes for why the Jewish soldiers committed atrocities (e.g. massacres) are compatible with Vetlesen's model on collective evildoing. However, they do not account for the added explanatory variable – a sense of vulnerability. This factor affects the *character* of the perpetrator which enables him to seek a remedy of this highly uncomfortable state of being through the means of violence. So what indicates that a 'sense of vulnerability' among the Jewish soldiers affected their behavior of committing massacres? And is it best characterized as personal or collective vulnerability?

### 5.3.5 *The Question of Vulnerability*

An obvious objection to emphasizing ideology and malevolence as causes to these massacres is the fact that it happened during a civil war. The sense of fear and insecurity in the Jewish community in Palestine (the Yishuv) were not merely products of ideological conditioning. Insecurity was not just figments of the fighters' imagination, though ideology and historical experience may certainly have reinforced this sense of insecurity. The war was real and several attacks occurred against the Yishuv, including three massacres against Jews (Morris, 2004a: 7). But even though the Palestinian attacks on the Yishuv were real, and certainly affected the Jewish soldiers' attitudes and motivations, the Palestinians did not represent a significant military threat to the Jewish community as a whole, nor to the Zionist project. This was understood by the Jewish leaders. They were aware of the collapse of the Palestinian leadership and of general weaknesses of the Palestinian society, not least due to their infiltration operations – a collection of intelligence called 'the Village Files' (Pappé, 2006: 17-22). The military weakness of the Palestinians is clearly reflected in a testimony of a Palmach soldier:

When the Egyptian army arrived, it was a completely different situation. The Egyptian army arrived when we had wiped out all [Palestinian] Arab resistance, which wasn't that strong. It would be an exaggeration to say we fought against the Palestinians. [T]here were no big battles; why? Because they had no military capabilities, [they] weren't organized

(Zochrot, 2012)

Thus, the Palestinians did not represent a significant military threat. The Jewish leadership was more concerned with the British in this respect, and with the general

international response (Pappé, 2006: 26). The neighboring Arab states represented a bigger military threat than the Palestinians, but the Jewish leadership knew they were hesitant regarding intervention. The Palestinians did, however, represent a major threat to the Zionist project *demographically* (Pappé, 2006: 26). Furthermore, feelings of an immediate threat were dramatically heightened among the Jewish soldiers in the weeks following the Arab states intervention. A Jewish soldier has this to say about the level of fear during that period:

[Question]: What was the atmosphere among the people in terms of the feelings they had about what happened then, during that time?

[Jewish soldier]: It was a horrible period: *we were sure that the Egyptians would wipe us out.* (...)

[Question]: So in terms of the feeling, there was a feeling that it was like the end?

[Jewish soldier]: That's what I observed, unpleasantly.

(Zochrot, 2010, italics mine)

It appears that, a situation which heightens the feeling of vulnerability, to the level of it being an issue of survival, decreases the threshold for committing massacres. The feeling of it being a state of emergency is followed by a feeling of a different set of moral obligations. In such a situation stopping those who commit massacres is also more difficult. An example of this is the answer a Jewish soldier got from his platoon commander after reporting about a rape and a murder done by a Jewish soldier. The platoon commander answered: "Stop it you! We're all going to die in a week or two, what are you messing around with here". After quoting his commander, the Palmach soldier continues:

[T]hat was the mood back then. Later on the situation got better. *We saw the Egyptians weren't worth much, and they can be wiped out,* and we really did attack the cannons and destroyed them and killed lots of Egyptians there. And after that the situation stabilized

(Zochrot, 2010, italics mine)

What follows from this discussion on vulnerability is that feelings of fear appear to emphasize the aspect of self-defense experienced as *preemption*. The collective sense of vulnerability is based on fearful expectations about the immediate *future*. The logic goes: "They are about to wipe us out, so we have to wipe them out first". This sense of self defense is somewhat different from the general mood later in the war, e.g. during

Operation Hiram late October, when Israel had basically turned victorious and was primarily consolidating its power rather than fighting for survival. And as shown above, this period of the war – where feelings of preemption were arguably low – was in fact *the period with most massacres*. As argued earlier, this correlated with orders and operations for expulsion. So what can be said about vulnerability in such a period where a sense of *preemption* is unlikely to be present?

As shown and argued in the case-studies above, feeling of revenge is a potent source of violence. It is also different from feelings of fear. So how do issues of survival, self-defense and vulnerability relate to feelings of revenge? My impression is that in the cases where the threat is not felt as immediate, the sense of *self-defense* is still present but is seen as *retaliation* rather than preemption. Both of these perspectives of self-defense – preemption and retaliation – are in line with Vetlesen's (2005: 175) model. The question of vulnerability in such a scenario is better understood as: to commit massacres as a means to 'transfer' vulnerability which is already inflicted on to the perpetrator group. The sense of vulnerability is more about the collective burden of having been a victim (collective history) rather than about expectations of an immediate threat (the future). In this way, the desire to inflict pain on representatives of the target-group stems more from feelings of *revenge* than feelings of fear. However, they go well together as both can be a source of desire to inflict pain on others. They both represent an explanatory variable for causing Jewish soldiers to commit massacres in 1948, i.e. collective vulnerability.

I want to end this discussion with a quote by a Palmach soldier which reflects the general argument of this thesis: the synthesis between orders and desires. This testimony indicates that the soldiers *wanted* to hurt some *specific* enemy group, and that this desire correlated with the orders the Jewish soldiers received in 1948.

[Jewish soldier]: [The Beduins] were terribly afraid. When we would appear with the jeeps, the men would mount their horses and run away, leaving the women and the children. We never touched them, right? *These are not the people we wanted to hurt.*

[Question:] There were no orders to expel them, to transfer them?

[Jewish soldier]: No, no.

(Zochrot, 2010, italics mine)

# Chapter 6

## Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the question: what caused Jewish soldiers to commit massacres during the 1948 Palestine War. In efforts to answer this question, I have proposed a framework for explanation which combines character (i.e. certain psychological conditions) with social structure and circumstance. The causal mechanisms between these factors have been explained through a model on ‘collective evildoing’; a model developed by Arne Johan Vetlesen (2005). By applying this model on the Palestinian case in general, and the massacres in particular, this thesis has shown that *orders* for expulsion played an important role for causing Jewish soldiers to commit massacres. However, the impact of such orders is not best understood as resulting from a norm of “obedience to authority”. Rather, the orders for expelling Palestinians in particular military operations provided a sense of *authorization* for committing massacres, which in turn appear to have been *initiated* by some Jewish soldiers. Thus a stark dichotomy between “following orders” and “acting on own initiative” becomes elusive. The interaction between the two is better understood this way: the orders provided a sense of “not feeling responsible for one’s own actions”. Thus, on the one hand, the perpetrator enters a so-called “agentic state”; viewing himself merely as a tool. On the other hand, the Jewish soldiers who committed massacres *wanted* to act this way. Statements about ‘revenge’ and behavior of excessive violence – the findings of this thesis – are indications which point to a *desire* to hurt the Palestinians. Such a perspective leads to an emphasis on the *character* of the perpetrators as an explanatory variable. In this way, orders for expulsion can be understood as a factor which helps the perpetrator to act atrociously without feelings of guilt. Ideology and norms appear to have had similar effect.

Zionism provided an ideational framework to motivate and justify atrocious acts as well as making collective identity an existential issue. Strong settler community norms of ‘collectivity’ and ‘purity’ arguably helped in this respect. A crucial element for

Jewish soldiers to commit massacres appears to be *group-thinking*. Statements supporting such an inference have been presented and analyzed. This thesis has proposed an explanation on *how* such ideas contributed in causing Jewish soldiers to commit massacres. This thesis has also proposed an explanation on *how* such ideas were developed in the first place – that such ideas are attractive for those who feel collectively excluded and *vulnerable*.

Besides pointing to *circumstantial* factors – which provided a heightened sense of vulnerability and legitimacy to act violently – this thesis has emphasized the Jewish experience in Europe for causing collective vulnerability. It has shown how links between the Holocaust and the 1948 War was made by leaders and soldiers alike. I have proposed an explanation on how this collective experience may have contributed in causing the massacres; viewing the massacres as means of getting rid of collective vulnerability. This is explained as a predominantly *unconscious* process of ‘transferring’ vulnerability from one’s own group to the victim-group, thus viewing the burden of ‘carrying’ collective vulnerability as a zero-sum game. Brutal acts which appear not to have been guided by rational military or political considerations are interpreted as indications for this “transfer of vulnerability”-mechanism. However, it is plausible that it applies more generally; not just an important factor for causing the massacres, but also important for causing the expulsions and the destruction of the Palestinian society as such. The challenge of verifying this “transfer of vulnerability”-hypothesis makes the inference more suggestive than conclusive, and more certain in instances of *excessive* violence. Furthermore, this explanation’s applicability is expected to vary, not only between different cases of massacres but also between individual perpetrators. This expectation is based on the complex nature of the research question itself. Such a difficult question as “what caused the Jewish soldiers to commit massacres in the 1948 Palestine War?” is from the outset expected to have both *equifinality* and *multifinality*, i.e. “many alternative causal paths to the same outcome” and “many outcomes consistent with a particular value of one [explanatory] variable”, respectively (George and Bennett, 2005: 10). Thus the chances that a particular strong causal relationship exists across the board are unlikely, and it is preferable that the causal model sketched out in this thesis remains broad.

Generally, this thesis has shown how it was likely that feelings of Jewish collective vulnerability – combined with ideological conditioning – interacted with war time circumstances and together caused some Jewish soldiers to commit massacres. While an “expulsion order”-context made massacres more likely, such a context has been shown to be neither necessary nor sufficient for massacres to occur. In massacres occurring without an expulsion order (e.g. Deir Yassin), factors of ideology, character and circumstance appear to have had more impact on behavior. This thesis has also shown how Vetlesen’s model on ‘collective evildoing’ can be fruitfully applied on non-genocidal cases of ethnic cleansing.



# Bibliography

- Abdel Jawad, Saleh (2007). "Zionist Massacres: the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem in the 1948 War", in Benvenisti, E., C. Gans, and S. Hanafi, (Eds.) *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees*, New York: Springer, pp. 59-127.
- Achcar, Gilbert (2011). *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives*. London: Saqi Books.
- Beilin, Yossi (1992). *Israel: Den politiske historien*. Exodus.
- Ben-Gurion, David (2011). "On the Partition of Palestine" in Kaplan, E. and D. J. Penslar (Eds.) *The Origins of Israel, 1882-1948*. The University of Wisconsin Press. [Originally written in 1937].
- Butenschøn, Nils A. (2006). *Drømmen om Israel: Historiske og ideologiske forutsetninger for staten Israel*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Finkelstein, Norman (1991) "Myths, Old and New", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21(1):66-89.
- Finkelstein, Norman (1992) "Rejoinder to Benny Morris", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21(2): 61-71.
- Free Dictionary, The "Massacre" [Online] Available at: [www.thefreedictionary.com/massacre](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/massacre) [Accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013]
- Galtung, Johan (2012) "Sociocide, Palestine and Israel". TRANSCEND Media Service. [Online] Available at: [www.transcend.org/tms/2012/10/sociocide-palestine-and-israel](http://www.transcend.org/tms/2012/10/sociocide-palestine-and-israel) [Accessed: 10th October 2013]
- George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett (2005) *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gerring, John (2007). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge University Press.
- Glover, Jonathan (2001). *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century*. London: Pimlico.
- Gorny, Yosef (1987). *Zionism and The Arabs 1882-1948*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Hagtvet, Bernt (2008) "Den farlige renhetslengselen" in Hagtvet, B. (ed.) *Folkemordenes svarte bok: Politisk massevold og systematiske menneskerettighetsbrudd i det 20. århundret*. Universitetsforlaget, pp. 21-57.

- Hogan, Matthew (2001) "The 1948 Massacre at Deir Yassin Revisited". *The Historian* 60(2): 309-334.
- Karch, Efraim (2002). *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Palestine War 1948*. Osprey Publishing.
- Kellerman, Aharon (1993). *Society and Settlement: Jewish Land of Israel in the Twentieth Century*. State University of New York Press.
- Khalidi, Walid (1971). *From Heaven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948*. Beirut: the Institute for Palestine Studies.
- Khalidi, Walid (1998) "Introduction" in Munayyer, Spiro "The Fall of Lydda", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27(4):80-98.
- Khalidi, Walid (2005) "Why Did the Palestinians Leave, Revisited", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34(2): 42-54.
- Khalidi, Walid (2008) "The Fall of Haifa Revisited", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 37(3): 30-58.
- Kimmerling, Baruch & Joel S. Migdal (2003). *The Palestinian People: A History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Law Dictionary, The "What Is Criminal Intent?" [Online] Available at: [www.thelawdictionary.org/criminal-inten](http://www.thelawdictionary.org/criminal-inten) [Accessed: 14th October 2013]
- Levene, Mark and Penny Roberts (1999). *The Massacre in History*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Mahoney, James and Gary Goertz (2004) "The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research", *American Political Science Review* 98(4): 653-669.
- Mann, Michael (2005). *The Dark side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Masalha, Nur (1991) "A Critique of Benny Morris", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21(1):90-97.
- Masalha, Nur (2012). *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory*. London: Zed Books.
- Morris, Benny (1986) "Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948", *The Middle East Journal* 40(1): 82-109.
- Morris, Benny (1991) "Response to Finkelstein and Masalha", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21(1):98-114.

- Morris, Benny (1995) "Falsifying the Record: A Fresh Look at Zionist Documentation of 1948", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24(3): 44-62.
- Morris, Benny (1999a) "Operation Hiram Revisited: A Correction", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28(2): 68-76.
- Morris, Benny (1999b). *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.
- Morris, Benny (2004a). *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. Cambridge University Press.
- Morris, Benny (2004b) "The Tantura 'Massacre' Affair", *The Jerusalem Report* February 4th.
- Mønnesland, Svein (2008) "Etnisk rensing i det tidligere Jugoslavia" in Hagtvet, B. (ed.) *Folkemordenes svarte bok: Politisk massevold og systematiske menneskerettighetsbrudd i det 20. århundret*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, pp. 347-360.
- Nets-Zehngut, Rafi (2011) "Palestinian Autobiographical Memory Regarding the 1948 Palestinian Exodus", *Political Psychology* 32(2): 271-295.
- Pappé, Ilan (2001) "The Tantura Case in Israel: The Katz Research and Trail". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 30(3): 19-39.
- Pappé, Ilan (2006). *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications Limited.
- Parsons, Laila (2000). *The Druze between Palestine and Israel 1947-49*. Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Parsons, Laila (2001) "The Druze and the birth of Israel" in Rogan, E. and A. Shlaim (Eds.) *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 60-78.
- Persson, Sune (2007). *Palestina-konflikten*. Malmö: Studentlitteratur.
- Picaudou, Nadine (2008) "The Historiography of the 1948 Wars". *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*. [Online] Available at: [www.massviolence.org/IMG/article\\_PDF/The-Historiography-of-the-1948-Wars.pdf](http://www.massviolence.org/IMG/article_PDF/The-Historiography-of-the-1948-Wars.pdf) [Accessed: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012]
- Rogan, Eugene (2011). *The Arabs: A History*. London: Penguin Books.
- Rogan, Eugene and Avi Shlaim (2001). *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*. Cambridge University Press.
- Said, Edward W. (1980). *The Question of Palestine*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Shavit, Ari (2004) 'Survival of the Fittest? An Interview with Benny Morris', *Haaretz* January 9<sup>th</sup>.

- Shlaim, Avi (1995) "The Debate About 1948", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27(3): 287-304.
- Shlaim, Avi (2001) *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*. London: Penguin Books.
- Stenvik, Bår (2013) Hvem er de onde blant oss? *Dagbladet*. [Online] 18th October. Available at: [www.dagbladet.no/2013/10/18/kultur/kronikk/debatt/meninger/debattinnlegg/29858785/](http://www.dagbladet.no/2013/10/18/kultur/kronikk/debatt/meninger/debattinnlegg/29858785/) [Accessed: 22 October 2013].
- Terry, Janice. J. (1976) "Zionist Attitudes toward Arabs", *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6(1): 67-78.
- Vetlesen, Arne Johan (2005). *Evil and Human Agency: Understanding Collective Evildoing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Waage, Hilde Henriksen (2013). *Konflikt og stormaktspolitikk i Midtøsten*. Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
- Zochrot (2010) Testimony by Amnon Neumann, a Palmach soldier from the 1948 War. [Online] Available at: [www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/amnon-neumann](http://www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/amnon-neumann) [Accessed: 24th October 2013].
- Zochrot (2012a) Testimony by Binyamin Eshet, a Palmach soldier from the 1948 War. [Online] Available at: [www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/binyamin-eshet-palmach-soldier](http://www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/binyamin-eshet-palmach-soldier) [Accessed: 24th October 2013].
- Zochrot (2012b) Testimony by Yerachmiel Kahanovich, Palmach soldier from the 1948 War. [Online] Available at: [www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/yerachmiel-kahanovich-palmach-soldier](http://www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/yerachmiel-kahanovich-palmach-soldier) [Accessed: 24th October 2013].
- Zochrot (2012c) Testimony by Uri Pinkerfeld, a Palmach soldier from the 1948 War. [Online] Available at: [www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/uri-pinkerfeld-palmach-soldier](http://www.zochrot.org/en/testimony/uri-pinkerfeld-palmach-soldier) [Accessed: 24th October 2013].
- Østerud, Øyvind (2007). *Statsvitenskap: Innføring i politisk analyse*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.